



General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

61st plenary meeting
Tuesday, 5 March 2024, 4.25 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Francis (Trinidad and Tobago)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Lapasov (Uzbekistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 4.25 p.m.

Agenda item 63 (continued)

Use of the veto

Mr. Habashneh (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting.

I would also like to note that my country's delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/78/PV.59). It is an honour for me to deliver this statement in my national capacity.

This important meeting is being held in the light of the use of the veto by the United States of America, a permanent member of the Security Council, against a draft resolution put forward by the sisterly People's Democratic Republic of Algeria in the Council on behalf of the Arab Group (S/2024/173). That draft resolution called for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip to prevent an exacerbation of the humanitarian crisis caused by the Israeli aggression, which has thus far killed approximately 30,000 Palestinians, most of them women and children.

At a time when the Israeli war is entering its sixth month, the Council continues to fail to adopt a clear and explicit resolution that enforces an immediate ceasefire pursuant to its responsibilities mandated to it

by the Charter of the United Nations. In that regard, we reiterate our call for an end to the Israeli aggression against the people in Gaza and the implementation of the provisions of international law without discrimination or favouritism. We emphasize that Israel's continued arrogance and aggression is only a result of the Council's failure to compel a ceasefire.

Jordan also condemns Israel's continued barbaric massacres of the people of Gaza, the most recent of which was the targeting by the Israeli occupation army of civilians who were merely trying to get some humanitarian assistance in Al-Rashid Street, which has led to the martyrdom of over than 100 Palestinians and the injury of hundreds of innocent people. That is another war crime that the world is witnessing without standing up for the victims or holding the perpetrators accountable.

We warn of the consequences of Israel carrying out a military operation in the city of Rafah, to which hundreds of thousands of unarmed civilians have been displaced, seeking safe refuge from the ongoing Israeli barbaric war atrocities being carried out throughout the Gaza Strip. Jordan reiterates its total rejection of any attempts to forcibly displace Palestinians, whether within their territory or outside of it. We also emphasize the centrality of the protection of civilians and their return to their places of residence.

Jordan will continue its efforts to facilitate by all means available the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Gaza. We stress the need for the international community and the Council to immediately and

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effectively take action to prevent the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Strip. We also urge the international community to intensify the provision of humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza immediately and sustainably, and we call on the international community to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) so that it can carry out its role as per the United Nations mandate.

In the same vein, we call upon Israel, the occupying Power, to respect the historic and legal status of the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. We emphasize that the Jordanian Waqf authority has the exclusive right to manage all affairs of Al-Haram Al-Sharif and organize access to it. We warn that if Israel continues to impose restrictions that prevent the worshipers from entering Al-Haram Al-Sharif, especially with the continued war in the Strip and as the holy month of Ramadan draws near, that would be a harbinger of more violence.

In conclusion, Jordan reiterates its firm conviction that peace is necessary for regional and international stability. We reaffirm our support for the fraternal Palestinian people in achieving all their rights, most importantly their right to establish an independent and sovereign Palestinian State along the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, the Arab Peace Initiative and the two-State solution as the only means to achieving just, comprehensive and sustainable peace.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting pursuant to resolution 76/262.

Notwithstanding many calls for a ceasefire, Israel has continued its violent random shelling in the Gaza Strip, which claimed catastrophic human losses of tens of thousands of civilians killed or injured, mostly women and children. Moreover, Israel is wantonly destroying houses, schools, hospitals, places of worship and infrastructure. That is a clear violation of international law and international humanitarian law.

The Kingdom of Morocco strongly condemns the targeting by Israeli forces of Palestinian civilians who were awaiting humanitarian aid in Al-Rashid Street in the north of the Gaza Strip, leading to the killing and injuring of hundreds of people. We call

for an independent and transparent investigation into that shameful incident and for those responsible to be held accountable. Threats by Israel to intensify the military operations throughout Gaza, including Rafah, is completely unacceptable. That will exacerbate the already dire humanitarian situation in Gaza and will lead only to more displacement and killing of civilians.

The Kingdom of Morocco reaffirms the urgent need for the international community to urgently reach an immediate, sustainable and comprehensive ceasefire and to ensure the unobstructed delivery of sufficient quantities of humanitarian aid to Palestinians while providing protection to the Palestinian people under international law and international humanitarian law. Prisoners and detainees must be released, and a political prospect must be achieved to settle the Palestinian question.

The Kingdom of Morocco rejects and condemns all violations, the policy of collective punishment, forced displacement and threats to the national security of neighbouring States. The Kingdom of Morocco reiterates that the Gaza Strip is an integral part of Palestinian territories, an integral part of the united Palestinian State.

The Kingdom of Morocco supports the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which has been able to operate for 75 years. It has played an important role in supporting education and providing health care and social services to millions of Palestinian refugees. The Kingdom of Morocco stresses the importance of supporting UNRWA in order to allow it to have enough resources to continue its noble mandate in the best manner possible.

As we approach the holy month of Ramadan, the Kingdom of Morocco, under the leadership of King Mohammed VI, Chair of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, calls for the need to respect the legal, religious and historic status of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the holy places. All practices and violations that abolish prospects of peace in the region must end. King Mohammed IV, as Chair of the Al-Quds Committee, calls for maintaining the unique status of the City of Jerusalem. Its legal, historical and demographic status must not be changed, as it is a spiritual centre for coexistence among the followers of the three Abrahamic religions.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Morocco stresses its firm, clear and steadfast position towards the just Palestinian question and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, most notably their right to establish an independent Palestinian State along the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Kingdom of Morocco will continue to support international efforts and to provide all forms of support to our brethren in Palestine and to the Palestinian National Authority to overcome the current tragedy.

Ms. Baimarro (Sierra Leone): This meeting is being held at a time when the situation in the Gaza Strip has further deteriorated significantly. It was our hope four months ago, when this issue was brought to the General Assembly, that a definitive solution could have been reached by this time whereby the Security Council would mirror the action by the Assembly in its adoption of resolutions ES-10/21 and ES-10/22, in demanding a humanitarian ceasefire.

Several weeks after the adoption by the Security Council of resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023), their non-implementation, with implications for the Council's authority and the legitimacy of the collective security scheme, have led to even more tragic incidents in the Gaza Strip. The absence of prompt and effective action by the Security Council due to the use of the veto cannot be reconciled with the obligation to act and uphold the fundamental principles espoused in the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant international law, including international humanitarian law.

We are once again obliged to recall resolution 76/262, which demands that the President of the General Assembly convene a plenary meeting when a veto is cast in the Security Council. Sierra Leone, an elected member of the Security Council, at the meeting held in the Security Council on 20 February 2024 under the agenda item "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question" (see S/PV.9552), voted in favour of the draft resolution (S/2024/173), which was subsequently not adopted owing to the non-concurring vote of a permanent member of the Council. As we stated in the Security Council Chamber, Sierra Leone voted in favour of the draft resolution because of the imperative for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the release of all hostages without any precondition.

On several occasions, the attention of the United Nations has been drawn to the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the occupied territory, the most recent being the white note from the Office for

the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, informing the Security Council of the imminent risk of conflict-induced famine and widespread food insecurity. The statistics presented are distressing, highlighting that almost 2.2 million Palestinians are exposed to severe hunger, the highest level ever classified worldwide.

Given the above instances, and considering the disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable groups, such as children, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly and the disabled, Sierra Leone reiterates its call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, demands the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas, rejects forced displacement of the Palestinians, and calls for full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access into the Gaza Strip, especially in the north, via all possible routes.

We acknowledge ongoing diplomatic efforts from all quarters, including the one mediated by the United States, Qatar and Egypt. We urge States with the relevant influence to persistently pressure the parties to help to deliver a comprehensive, realistic and sustainable deal for both Israel and Palestine.

While we are deeply saddened by the ongoing devastation and anguish endured by the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, we recall the unjustifiable horror committed by Hamas against Israeli civilians on 7 October 2023. This we have condemned, and we have called for accountability for the perpetrators of all serious crimes of concern to the international community and breaches of international law. In particular, for all allegations of conflict-related sexual violence reported since 7 October 2023, we call for appropriate and timely investigations, in accordance with relevant international law and human rights law.

We reiterate our support for all humanitarian personnel, including UNRWA personnel, working in the Gaza Strip, for the bravery and selfless sacrifice they display daily in seeking to maintain a semblance of dignity, the human dignity innate to all, including the people of the State of Palestine. On account of this dignity and the innate rights of the people of Palestine and Israel to live side by side in peace and security, we close by stressing the need for all stakeholders to preserve the validity of a political approach based on the two-State solution.

Mr. Al-Fatlawi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for his efforts in convening this meeting.

The delegation of Iraq aligns itself with the statements by the Group of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/78/PV.59).

This extraordinary session of the General Assembly is being convened to discuss putting an end to the genocide and the systematic killing that has inflicted considerable human suffering and heavy casualties and undermined regional and international stability, following the repeated inability of the Security Council to uphold its legal and humanitarian responsibilities. The most recent of these was its failure to adopt the draft resolution submitted by Algeria (S/2024/173) that demanded an end to the war and to the Israeli crimes of aggression and genocide against the Palestinian people, specifically in the Gaza Strip.

Member States have repeatedly called for an end to those brutal acts and have expressed the will of the international community by adopting two consecutive resolutions of the General Assembly calling for a ceasefire and for a cessation of military operations, as well as for the delivery of humanitarian aid to the besieged Palestinian people (resolutions ES-10/21 and ES-10/22). Nevertheless, the occupation forces have ignored those calls and expanded military operations using various types of destructive weapons. They have launched a comprehensive war that has increased the number of martyrs and the injured and destroyed residential buildings and infrastructure.

The war on Gaza has entered a very serious new phase that portends more destruction, killing, displacement and starvation in a manner that will lead to an escalation of what we have seen in the past few days. The occupation forces continue their acts of genocide and killing, which are tantamount to war crimes and genocide. They ignore international humanitarian law and human norms while acting without restraint or accountability. They even find flimsy excuses to defend those crimes at the Security Council. Iraq condemns the most recent crime of deliberate mass killing by the Israeli occupation forces of defenceless civilians during the Al-Tahin massacre, which is absolutely despicable. That massacre shows the brutality of the occupation authorities and the extent of their aggressive behaviour.

The international community has a legal, humanitarian and moral responsibility. Our common humanity is being tested. We have the responsibility to respond to the distress calls by the people of Gaza, who cannot find any place to protect themselves from the Israeli war machine. The Council must shoulder

its responsibility in maintaining international peace and security and in implementing the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The aggression, the war and the massacres must be brought to an end, as this tragic situation has led to inhumane conditions and poses a serious threat to regional and international peace and security.

Iraq emphasizes its support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which must continue its operations. We value the efforts by all UNRWA staff, who have persevered despite attacks against them and against their sites and the loss of their colleagues and family members. Iraq will continue to support UNRWA and provide assistance to the Palestinian people.

Iraq is following with grave concern reports indicating that Israeli occupation authorities are threatening to commit yet another disastrous massacre by planning a military invasion of the city of Rafah and forcibly displacing its people. We reject all those attempts and planning for massacres. We call upon the international community to put an end to the Israeli aggression, to respond to Israeli practices and violations, and to provide international protection to the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, we reiterate the position of the Government and the people of Iraq in support of the Palestinian question. We also support the Palestinian people in their resilience and self-determination and in the achievement of their aspirations for ending the occupation and establishing their independent State on the land of Palestine.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In General Assembly plenaries, each fresh incident of the United States using its veto in the Security Council on Gaza is increasingly distressing. It seems that we are not living in the real world, but rather in some surreal, nightmarish parallel universe.

For the fourth time now, the United Nations General Assembly is meeting to hear absolutely spurious justifications by the United States of its most recent move to block any calls to end violence in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict zone. We have once again heard from the delegation of the United States about the allegedly “effective efforts” of American diplomacy on the ground, which no one, including the international community, is supposed to interfere with. The outcome of these efforts is well-known. In Gaza, a genuine

slaughter continues — over the course of five months of escalation, more than 30,000 have died. This is an unprecedented number of civilian casualties, unseen since the end of the Second World War. The vast majority of those killed are civilians, many of them women and children. The number of injured has exceeded 70,000.

The scale of this humanitarian disaster is growing. According to the United Nations Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, approximately 700,000 of the 2.4 million inhabitants of Gaza are now on the brink of starvation. Those figures are shocking. The situation is worsened by the smear campaign launched at Israel's instigation against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which plays a key role in providing essential aid to Palestinians in Gaza and several neighbouring States. This topic is one that we have discussed separately in this very Hall.

An immediate end to the bloodshed in Gaza remains a humanitarian and moral imperative for the international community. It is no exaggeration to say that it is a measure of sorts when it comes to the humanity of our modern civilization. Russia has worked tirelessly to achieve this goal since the first days following the 7 October 2023 attacks, which we unequivocally condemn. We believe, though, that reacting to these attacks through collective punishment of Palestinian civilians is unacceptable and is a violation of international law.

As early as on 16 October 2023, we presented to the Security Council our first draft resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza (S/2023/772). We all know how discussions evolved in the Council on this topic afterwards. All draft resolutions with similar calls as well as subsequent efforts in this direction were constantly blocked by the United States, which, time and again, coldly, without any hesitation, used their veto and thus gave Israel *carte blanche* for further annihilation of Gazans. On 20 February, a similar fate befell the draft from our Algerian colleagues (S/2024/173). It was a worthy, well-crafted document for which the Algerian delegation, on behalf of the Arab Group, held all necessary consultations in good faith.

This current unprecedented outbreak of violence in Gaza is largely the result of a long-standing impasse in the Middle East peace process, caused once again by the efforts of the United States to monopolize mediation efforts to stop the work of the international quartet of mediators — the United States, the Russian Federation,

the European Union and the United Nations — and to further its own selfish interests, striving to impose them on the countries of the region.

What is happening in Gaza obviously shows what we have been warning about for years. A resurgence of large-scale confrontation and violence in the region will continue, inevitably, until we resolve the underlying causes of this long-standing conflict through collective efforts, that is to say that we create a Palestinian State in accordance with Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. Palestinians must be able to exercise their right to create a state within the 1967 borders and with its capital in East Jerusalem. Only this just approach, based on international law, can lead to lasting peace in the region.

It is important for Council members to show resolve and unity to bring about an early ceasefire and restore peace. Our common goal is to help the parties establish direct dialogue during which they can resolve all disagreements regarding the final status of Palestinian territories.

We continue to support a lasting negotiation process on a platform approved by the United Nations, which should then lead to the creation of a sovereign Palestinian State, coexisting in peace and security with Israel. At the same time, we note that in West Jerusalem there are differing opinions regarding the future of Gaza, and there are those who would like to maintain Palestinian divisions to exploit their disagreements and then blame the lack of a partner on the Palestinian side for the blocking of negotiations. We believe that it is necessary to ensure political and geographic unity in Gaza and the West Bank, without which the situation in the conflict zone will continue to lead to new outbreaks of violence, new victims and further devastation in the entire Middle East.

To achieve this goal of Palestinian consensus, we held a meeting of representatives of leading Palestinian organizations in Moscow from 29 February to 2 March, during which parties continued their dialogue with the goal of achieving comprehensive national unity, including all Palestinian forces and factions within the Palestine Liberation Organization, which is the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

The Russian Federation is prepared to continue supporting constructive contacts with all parties involved and contributing to the settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli issue. First and foremost, we

must end the bloodshed and prevent the crisis from consuming the entire region. Otherwise, this conflict will never be stopped.

Mr. Valtýsson (Iceland): Iceland aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday by Liechtenstein on behalf of a group of countries (see A/78/PV.59).

We deeply regret the ongoing impasse in the Security Council and call on Council members to redouble their efforts to address the grave humanitarian situation and the need for concrete action to protect civilians and facilitate the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people in Gaza.

Iceland's position has been clear and consistent. We have joined calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and unimpeded humanitarian access. Humanitarian assistance must reach more than 2 million civilians desperately in need of life-saving aid. It is needed now and must be delivered now. We also continue to condemn in the strongest terms the brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks by Hamas and call for immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. We have simultaneously called on Israel to fully comply with international law, including international humanitarian law, protect civilians and provide sufficient humanitarian aid in accordance with the legally binding orders issued by the International Court of Justice. We deplore the immense suffering of innocent civilians and the fate of more than 30,000 people, including women and children, who have been killed.

Tragically, there is no safe place in Gaza, and a military action in Rafah would dramatically worsen an already catastrophic humanitarian situation. After more than four months of war, almost 2 million people have been displaced, schools have been either destroyed or turned into emergency shelters, health-care services are in tatters, and remaining hospitals are barely operational, with little or no electricity, fuel or medical supplies.

Under these dire circumstances, Iceland has greatly increased its humanitarian assistance to Gaza through various means and organizations. We fully recognize the unique role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in delivering basic services in Gaza and highly appreciate the swift actions by the Agency and the Secretary-General in the wake of the serious allegations of the involvement of a number of its employees in the

terrorist attacks on Israel in October 2023. We have the fullest confidence in the Office of Internal Oversight Services internal investigation and the external review led by Ms. Colonna.

Despite this dire situation, there must be a plan for the day after. Iceland recognized the state of Palestine in 2011 and has consistently advocated for the two-State solution based on international law, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition. We need a political process paving the way towards that end. Without it, there is no end to the vicious cycle of violence. Without it, there is no long-term sustainable solution to this conflict.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my country's delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Gulf Cooperation Council (see A/78/PV.59).

In a little more than a month, we will mark half a year since the start of the war in Gaza, in which the Palestinian people have been subjected to horrifying suffering, more than 100,000 Palestinians have been killed or injured and more than 80 per cent of the Gazan population have been displaced. The humanitarian crisis has reached unprecedented levels amid warnings by the United Nations about the possibility of imminent starvation, in particular in northern Gaza.

Despite the grave circumstances, we convene yet again here in this Hall following failure of the Security Council in February to adopt a draft resolution submitted by the Republic of Algeria on behalf of the Arab Group (S/2024/173) calling for an immediate cease-fire. The failure of repeated attempts to stop that bloody war threatens further unimaginable deterioration. That requires the Council to undertake its responsibilities in maintaining international peace and security. The failure to date of the Council to adopt a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire due to the repeated use of the veto is in disregard of the will of the majority of Member States and the urgent need to end the catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

To that end, we urge all Council members to continue working towards adopting a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire, regardless of the challenges involved. That is an urgent matter in the light of the increasing fears of further escalation and with the approach of the holy month of Ramadan, during which

measures and restrictions are usually imposed on the movement of worshippers. This causes tensions, which are expected to be worse this year as a result of the ongoing situation. Further efforts are therefore required, in the days and weeks to come, to reach an agreement that guarantees an end to the hostilities as soon as possible.

We hope that the mediation efforts led by the State of Qatar, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the United States will be successful. In parallel with those efforts, there is a need to reduce tensions across the occupied Palestinian territory, including by stopping speeches that incite hatred and violence, which we strongly condemn, in particular those made by Israeli government officials. Worshippers must be allowed to reach the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque in order to freely pray in safety, in line with the historic and legal status of Jerusalem and its holy sites.

We reaffirm the need for Israel to abide by its obligations in line with international humanitarian law. We call upon it to stop the policy of collective punishment against the Palestinian people and to allow the flow of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip in a swift, safe and unhindered manner to meet the immense needs on the ground. We call upon all parties to fully and rapidly implement resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023) and call for providing all necessary support to Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, to allow her to discharge her mandate without any obstacles.

Once again, we condemn the targeting by Israeli forces of thousands of Palestinians in the northern Gaza Strip as they gathered to receive humanitarian aid that is a lifeline for them and their families. That led to the killing and injury of hundreds of Palestinians. We reiterate the vital role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in delivering relief aid to those in need and providing basic services to refugees in the Gaza Strip and other areas of operation. The United Arab Emirates contributed \$20 million to support UNRWA as a result of the current war. We call on donor countries that suspended their funding to the Agency to reconsider their decision in the light of the difficult conditions that the people in Gaza are experiencing.

Finally, as we mentioned earlier, that war and the Palestinian question in general reflect the consequences of misusing the veto and failing to implement Security Council resolutions. Council reform has become

necessary in order for the Council to implement its mandate and safeguard the international legal order.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): We have arrived at the harrowing juncture marking five months of escalated violence in Gaza. Here we are again in this Hall, burdened with great concern amid a dire crisis in the Middle East. This conflict has inflicted tremendous casualties and suffering on civilians. The tragic aid delivery incident last week, resulting in the death of more than 100 Palestinians, just added to the atrocious security and humanitarian disasters in Gaza. The looming large-scale assault on Rafah threatens to further destabilize the already appalling situation. These ongoing casualties and destruction call for an immediate ceasefire. Regrettably, the responses from the Security Council thus far have proven inadequate. The Council's continuous division has failed to curb the relentless devastation and human suffering.

Viet Nam once again condemns in the strongest terms all forms of indiscriminate violence aimed at civilians and essential civilian infrastructure. We assert that these entities must be protected under international law, in line with international humanitarian law and relevant Security Council resolutions. We demand an immediate cessation of all forms of hostilities and violence to prevent further suffering and loss of life. Hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally. Priority must also be given to the delivery of water, food, medical aid, fuel and electricity to those in dire need. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) should continue to play a key role in that process. Viet Nam has provided humanitarian assistance to the people of Palestine and will continue to do so, including through UNRWA.

Viet Nam welcomes all international mediation and reconciliation endeavours aimed at achieving a durable and peaceful resolution grounded in international law and United Nations resolutions, which can be found in the two-State solution. We urge the Security Council to intensify its efforts to promptly address this crisis. The United Nations cannot afford another veto on a ceasefire and a chance for peace. We cannot afford to veto the future of Gaza. We count on the Security Council and the United Nations to deliver a cohesive and constructive directive to mitigate tensions, cease hostilities, safeguard civilians and foster dialogue and negotiations.

Mr. Pieris (Sri Lanka): I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting.

General Douglas MacArthur had this to say:

“Until a more perfect time for all, the United Nations Charter is our best hope for a more perfect world, and why the United Nations is the Vatican of Hope and the permanent representatives its archangels.”

I wonder whether the General might, in his heavenly abode, regret his wishes in the context of what we are seeing of Gaza and the failure to bring about a ceasefire.

Today we have come together to engage in constructive dialogue, fostering a meaningful exchange of ideas and experiences, shedding light on whether veto power has the potential to contribute towards plurality by providing a platform for diverse perspectives. It is believed that reforming the Security Council and ensuring greater inclusivity enhances plurality within the United Nations system.

The proliferation of the use of the veto in recent times has prevented the Security Council from exercising its functions with respect to some of the gravest threats to international peace and security, often in clear contravention of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Even the threat of the veto, the mere mention of a veto, has prevented the Security Council from addressing a situation that falls within its mandate, sometimes resulting in unprecedented humanitarian costs, as we have seen in the case of Gaza.

We cannot ignore the fact that, in accordance with Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council acts on behalf of the entire United Nations membership. That needs to be noted with care. It acts on behalf of the entire United Nations membership. It is therefore accountable to all States represented in the United Nations General Assembly. The veto prevents the Security Council from acting, and the Council fails with respect to performing its functions against the will of the quantitative majority required for Council decisions and, in many cases, against the views of the overwhelming majority of the United Nations membership.

It may be pertinent to observe that it is the General Assembly that is referred to first among the principal organs in Article 7 of the Charter of the United Nations — which members may check for themselves — and not any other arrangement, and this

construction is by deliberate design. It must also be appreciated that the Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security as mandated by the General Assembly. This responsibility is not exclusive. The Charter encourages nothing more than complementarity between principal United Nations organs to conduct their affairs within the *vires*, meaning the power, that has been conferred upon them. The Council cannot act *ultra vires*.

The debates of the permanent five members of the Council (P5) on the exercise of the power of the veto have been of great academic value and contributed to the legal literature of the United Nations in a substantial manner for decades. Veto power, exclusively held by the P5, is a feature that has attracted much debate by Member States, as it is said to be at cross-purposes with a key element of what the United Nations embodies, which is democracy.

In the meantime, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has informed us in the clearest terms of the dire plight surrounding both the civilian population and the Agency itself. The situation in Gaza has been highlighted by many others, including in the presentation by the representative of Médecins sans frontières at the Security Council recently (see S/PV.9556).

We must give due place to the fact that UNRWA has been a lifeline for Palestine refugees for the past 75 years. Throughout the past five months, UNRWA, an entity mandated by United Nations, has stood and operated in Gaza and provided aid to more than 1.9 million displaced Palestinians. It is an indictment of all those responsible that Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini of this United Nations-mandated body has had to tell us, in his letter dated 22 February, which he presented to us recently, that the Agency has reached a breaking point, that the last remaining hospitals are collapsing, and famine is imminent. His call for a closure of the gap between the Agency's mandate and its funding structure and for the Assembly to provide political support to sustain the Agency must be given immediate consideration. In this regard, we welcome the European Commission's decision to release 50 million euros out of a total budget of 82 million euros for 2024.

We take seriously the accusations levelled against 12 UNRWA employees, who were allegedly involved in the 7 October 2023 attacks, and emphasize the need to

have the matter comprehensively investigated in terms of the procedures established by law, and appropriate legal sanctions to be imposed in the event of complicity. However, it must be borne in mind that this United Nations-mandated body is an irreplaceable actor, providing humanitarian assistance in Gaza and the West Bank. We welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to task an independent investigation into the allegations. It is expected that all actors will cooperate and provide evidence to enable a clear picture of what appears to be a serious complaint regarding an act that must be weeded out of the system.

As we speak, loss of life among the population in Gaza has increased, as we have heard many times over, to more than 30,000, and there have been more than 70,000 injured. The direction that the situation on the ground is taking may result in even more dying from the consequences of the siege and resulting starvation imposed in Gaza than from the aerial bombings and ground attacks.

For our part, the Government of Sri Lanka is pleased to announce that the Cabinet of Sri Lanka, small as we are, has approved a proposal by President Wickremesinghe to create a fund to assist the affected children in Gaza. The Government will contribute \$1 million, and the aid will be distributed through United Nations agencies.

It is supremely ironic and certainly darkly humorous that this tormenting and brutalization of Palestinian children takes place as we discuss a Pact for the Future to be adopted at the Summit of the Future. What future and whose future are we talking about? Is it not the lives of our future generations? Is it not the lives of our children of today? Are we not talking also of the children of Gaza, who will be part of that Pact for the Future?

To preserve social justice principles within the framework of the United Nations, it is paramount that comprehensive efforts beyond the veto power, including international cooperation, diplomacy, advocacy and sustainable development initiatives, are undertaken through constructive dialogue among Member States that can foster the evolution of an environment of social justice and consequently lead to a more equitable and just world order.

It is time for us to stand with the people of Gaza, the Palestinian people and the peoples of a peace-loving world as a whole. A ceasefire is a must now, for events

of aggression have gone on unabated to the point that the flame of humanity in many of us cannot bear to stay alight any longer. It is also time for a lasting solution through the early implementation of General Assembly resolutions whereby both Israel and Palestine can live side-by-side based on the 1967 borders in a two-State structure.

Mr. Amorín (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay has historically disagreed with the institution of the veto right, which is a privilege at odds with the principle of equality between States. That is why it has encouraged all efforts aimed at increasing the Security Council's transparency and accountability, and ultimately its effectiveness as the main organ for maintaining international peace and security. We therefore welcome your convening of this meeting, Mr. President.

On the substance of the question before us, the conflict in Gaza, we would begin by condemning the brutal terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October 2023 and the taking of hostages, who are still being held captive, and we hope they are still alive. We also condemn the terrorist tactics that are being used against the civilian population and non-military installations as part of the war efforts.

The protection of civilians in armed conflict, the cornerstone of international humanitarian law, is an *erga omnes* norm, which applies to all parties and individuals. In the context that we are considering today, violations of that norm oblige us to urge the warring parties to comply with it, including the guiding principles of humanity, distinction, proportionality and military necessity. With every passing day, it is clearer and clearer that if hostilities do not cease, the civilian population in Gaza, in particular women and children, will continue to be the main victims of this bloody conflict.

In that regard, Uruguay reiterates its call for a temporary humanitarian ceasefire to allow for the release of hostages, the provision of the needed humanitarian assistance and the creation of the conditions necessary for a ceasefire and a peaceful solution to the conflict, based on the two-State solution, guaranteeing Israel secure borders and the exercise of the rights of the Palestinian people.

We hope that the statement recently approved unanimously by the Security Council on the tragic and deplorable events that occurred in the north of Gaza

will be exhaustively investigated, and those responsible brought to justice. This is a positive turn in the Council's work on this conflict, which will help to make progress towards a peaceful solution.

Mrs. Zalabata Torres (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia reiterates its robust rejection of the extent of the violence by the State of Israel that we have been witnessing in the Gaza Strip since 7 October 2023, following the terrible attack by Hamas. Unfortunately, every day shows how the Gaza Strip has become an arena of horror and devastation as a result of the total war and scorched earth policy of Israel.

This plenary meeting of the General Assembly, convened in response to the use of the veto in the Security Council with respect to a draft resolution that referred to the urgent need for a ceasefire to put an end to the serious humanitarian situation of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (S/2024/173), is addressing an issue of great importance.

In line with the historic position of Colombia on the use of the veto, the President of Colombia, Gustavo Petro Urrego, has reiterated his call for reform of the Security Council to eliminate the un-democratic prerogative of a few countries to impose their vetoes in a way that prevents us from moving forward with decisions on matters that affect international security and human rights at the global level, particularly since the majority of the Members of the United Nations voted against the war. The veto cannot continue to block and limit the organ of the United Nations system charged with ensuring international peace and security. We cannot continue to bear witness to a Security Council that is not able to function in the face of conflicts that have terrible civilian consequences on a daily basis, undermine harmony and life on this planet and destroy the very meaning of humanity.

That is why Colombia again firmly condemns the inability of the Security Council to bring about a humanitarian ceasefire and unanimously condemn violations of international humanitarian law. We call upon the entire international community, including all members of the Security Council, without exception, to show political will on the fundamental issue of protecting the life and security of thousands of civilians, who are systematically seeing their right to live in peace threatened. The Government of President Petro Urrego believes that holding States accountable for violating international law, in particular when such

breaches have dire humanitarian consequences, as is the case in Gaza, shows respect for the rule of law.

We reiterate our support for a comprehensive, peaceful and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, based on a two-State solution in which both States live side by side, within secure and internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, respecting human rights and international humanitarian law. We make a firm appeal for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, the immediate and unconditional release of hostages and measures by Israel to prevent acts of genocide.

The Government of Colombia, led by President Petro Urrego, has made available its good offices to establish a peace committee, made up of various countries, to achieve these goals and put an end to the barbarity that we are currently seeing.

Finally, and as we have said in various international forums, we ask that Palestine be admitted as a full Member State of the United Nations, as recognized by 139 countries in this General Assembly. We cannot continue to promote the interests of a minority group of countries with special rights.

In respect for the time allotted, the full text of my remarks has been made available to the Secretariat.

Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius): It is a matter of utmost regret that we must meet again today on the issue of the use of a veto to obstruct a draft resolution calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, adherence to international law, including international humanitarian law, and the prompt and unconditional release of hostages (S/2024/173).

We express our gratitude to Algeria for its relentless efforts in seeking a respite to this indiscriminate killing of innocent women and children and for allowing aid to enter without putting the people at greater risk.

The actions urged in the Security Council draft resolution had been overwhelmingly supported in the General Assembly on 12 December 2023 at the emergency special session by 153 votes in favour of the resolution entitled "Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations" (resolution ES-10/22).

Mauritius calls on the Security Council to act in accordance with its primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security. Mauritius is deeply

concerned by the continuing humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. The death toll has today surpassed 30,000. More than 360,000 homes have been destroyed and damaged, making Gaza almost uninhabitable. Approximately 1.7 million civilians have been displaced. These stark figures will only have increased and will no doubt continue to increase. How many more lives must end before the international community wakes up and reclaims its humanity?

Last week, at least 112 people were killed and 760 injured while queuing up for food when the Israeli Defense Force used live fire. The reported incident is deeply distressing, especially considering that this occurred when Palestinian civilians in a state of hunger and despair were simply seeking access to food aid.

Mauritius calls on all parties concerned to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect innocent civilians. Mauritius equally calls for the unconditional release of all hostages, as well as unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance. We support all calls for peace and dialogue. The two-State solution is the only viable option that can bring long-lasting peace to the region.

The catastrophic situation in Gaza demands urgent action. We therefore reiterate the urgent call of resolution ES-10/22 for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. At a time when most States will be fasting, Mauritius calls on Member States to recommit to support humanitarian response, accelerate life-saving assistance and promote lasting peace, security and freedom in the region.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): Guyana aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Pakistan and Malta on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the elected 10 members of the Security Council (E10), respectively (see A/78/PV.59). I make an additional contribution in my national capacity.

As the situation in the Gaza Strip worsens in unprecedented ways, the Security Council, regrettably, is still unable to deliver a ceasefire for the suffering population. It has been nearly five months since the war began, and resolutions calling for a ceasefire have been vetoed three times. The inaction in relation to a ceasefire, for which the entire Security Council has to shoulder the collective responsibility, is pegged to the use of the veto by one permanent member.

On 18 October 2023, when the first draft resolution on Gaza was vetoed (see S/PV.9442), the death toll in

Gaza was approximately 3,500. Since then, more than 26,000 more Palestinians have been killed, and more than 70,000 injured. Almost the entire population of 2.1 million people has been displaced. This is the human cost of the use of the veto and another horrific illustration of why its use should be heavily restrained, if not abolished.

The draft resolution that was vetoed on 20 February (S/2024/173) contained a number of key provisions which Guyana felt, and still feels, are critical for addressing the situation on the ground and guaranteeing the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers. These provisions included the call for a ceasefire, a call for scrupulous compliance with international law, the rejection of forced displacement of the Palestinian people and a call for the release of hostages. The draft resolution presented by Algeria after extensive consultation, in our view, was a well-balanced one. Guyana voted for the resolution because we were convinced that its adoption could lead to a crucial turning point in the conflict. We were convinced too that in adopting the resolution, the Security Council will comply with its Charter mandate to act in response to situations that undermine international peace and security. We were, therefore, deeply disappointed that despite the affirmative votes of 13 Council members, the draft resolution was not adopted.

The situation in the Gaza requires swift and urgent action by the Security Council. The state of food insecurity in Gaza is alarming, with everyone being food insecure and famine a real threat. It is appalling that people are now being targeted while attempting to secure food. In this regard, Guyana condemns the killing of civilians in Gaza under any circumstance, including as they try to secure basic necessities to survive.

Guyana reiterates its call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. We ask that all impediments to the achievement of a ceasefire be removed and for those with influence on the occupying Power to urge its full compliance with the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council since 7 October 2023. We also call on Member States and the international community not to be complicit in any way in Israel's crimes against the population in the Gaza Strip. The permanent resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the two-State solution. This must no longer be held hostage by recurring cycles of violence and the denial of the Palestinians' right to self-determination. Guyana urges new and bold steps to fast-track its implementation,

beginning with Palestine's admission as a full member of the United Nations. Guyana is prepared to contribute to fulfilling this objective.

Ms. Zacarias (Portugal): Portugal aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (see A/78/PV.59).

As co-sponsors of the veto initiative, Portugal views this debate as critical. The uncertainty generated by the frequent threats and uses of the veto by the Security Council poses significant risks to global peace and security. Since the last veto was cast by the Security Council on 20 February, many lives were lost in Gaza. In addition to the thousands already killed, more than 100 Palestinians have recently lost their lives while desperately trying to get food. People cannot be punished because they are starving. Humanitarian aid is not a bargaining chip and is not subject to conditionality. It is part of the hard-won gains of the international rules-based order that we keep on building collectively. For humanitarian aid to reach all those in need, an immediate humanitarian ceasefire is required. That much has been called for by the General Assembly in its resolution on the protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations, adopted during its tenth emergency special session (resolution ES-10/22).

It is our expectation that the Security Council mirrors this appeal in its discussions. I recall that several Council draft resolutions calling for a humanitarian ceasefire also contained paragraphs condemning terrorism and calling for the immediate release of the hostages. Unfortunately, all those draft resolutions were vetoed. Beyond the challenges of approving new Security Council resolutions, we have to make sure that we implement the existing ones, the old ones, but also the most recent ones — resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2722 (2024). By implementing them, we will be saving lives, avoiding the escalation of the conflict and contributing to the credibility of the multilateral system with the United Nations at its heart.

Let me finish by reiterating our condemnation of Hamas's brutal attack on Israel on 7 October 2023. We call for the immediate release of all hostages and support the efforts of the United States, Egypt, Qatar and others in this regard. We also call on all parties to fully comply with their obligations under international law, human rights law and international humanitarian law for the protection of civilians and to ensure rapid and safe humanitarian aid is delivered to the Palestinian population in Gaza to avoid an even greater humanitarian

catastrophe. We reaffirm our commitment to a just and comprehensive solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on a two-State solution. Only a credible political process and a negotiated agreement offers a chance of security and peace for all.

Mr. Ndoye (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on behalf of the members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/78/PV.59), and we would like to make a few remarks in our national capacity.

Like the majority of delegations, we lament the rejection by the Security Council, through the use of the veto, of draft resolution S/2024/173 on the situation in Palestine, submitted by Algeria. We are particularly concerned because this draft resolution, which focuses on humanitarian concerns, echoed calls from the international community made on several occasions, including on the occasion of the adoption of the two most recent resolutions at the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly. More than 30,000 have perished since October 2023, 70 per cent of whom were women and children. Sixty per cent of residential buildings in the Gaza Strip have been destroyed, and 2.3 million Gazan civilians, desperate, hungry and disoriented, are roaming, with no respite and no shelter, from the north to the south of the Strip.

In the current context, any offensive on the city of Rafah, where 1.5 million people are trying to survive in deplorable humanitarian conditions, would be carnage and would render de-escalation even less likely. We need to prevent the irreparable from being committed. For that reason, Senegal, while reaffirming our firm condemnation of the attacks against innocent civilians and our call for the freeing of hostages, once again calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to show maximum restraint, including by diligent implementation of the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice.

Reiterating our attachment to the values and ideals of the United Nations, my country remains convinced that only a lasting ceasefire will enable us to meet our humanitarian duty to the citizens of Gaza, who are suffering so acutely. We therefore once again would like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his tireless efforts for a coordinated response to this humanitarian crisis and his unfailing commitment to peace. We pay the same tribute to all United Nations bodies and their implementing partners, who are doing

the impossible on the ground to deliver aid, which is still meeting obstacles and is in no sense equal to the needs on the ground. My country welcomes once again the work of Mr. Philippe Lazzarini, Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and we stress that the reputation of his office and his 30,000 workers should not be tarnished without cause.

We are therefore extremely concerned at the decision of certain countries to suspend their financial support for UNRWA, owing to the serious accusations against some of its staff. As the United Nations authorities are carrying out an investigation to shed light on these allegations, we would like to ask those countries to reconsider their decision, given the dramatic consequences of their choice.

The tragedy unfolding in Gaza makes it difficult to accept the Security Council's indecision. The rejection of the draft resolution through the use of an instrument of another time has deprived the Palestinian population of its aspirations to peace and dimmed its hopes of simply being able to survive. The Security Council cannot, by remaining inactive, abolish the legitimate concerns of an entire people, who have the right to live in peace on all of their land.

Our Organization is at a crossroads, and our peoples are looking to us, still believing that the members of the Security Council will go the extra mile to protect human lives. I have no doubt, for my part, that the General Assembly, by combining our voices together, will continue to contribute to efforts for a humanitarian ceasefire and, in the long term, for a two-State solution, which is the only possible way to peace.

Mr. Farhan (Bangladesh): I thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing today's important meeting on the special report of the Security Council regarding the use of the veto. Once again, we are here owing to the use of the veto against the adoption of a resolution by member States to stop one of the greatest massacres in the history of the world. For almost five months, we have heard statement after statement in the General Assembly and the Security Council narrating the war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity committed against the Palestinians. In almost all the meetings in the United Nations, Member States have been calling for an immediate stop to the killing of Palestinians. However, regrettably, this body has failed to stop the mass killing of civilians by Israel, and more than 30,000 Palestinians have been killed,

among whom the majority are children and women. We are also deeply concerned regarding the deliberate and targeted attack on a humanitarian convoy and the killing of more than 100 and injury of more than 750 hungry Palestinians who were waiting for food aid.

We thank Algeria for the press statement issued by the Security Council. However, we want to see the Member States of the United Nations respecting the presidential statement of the Security Council.

In the past five months, several initiatives for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza have failed owing to the use of the veto in the Security Council. The body that has the primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security has miserably failed to do so in the case of Palestine. Inaction by the Security Council, despite it witnessing one of the greatest massacres in world history, reminds us that there must be an effective reform of the working methods of the Council, including the veto system. We cannot accept that, owing to only the veto system, we remain actionless while thousands of innocents are dying. There should not be and cannot be any legitimate justification of this inaction. What can be more unfortunate than this, that the body of the United Nations in which all of its members have representation, cannot implement a resolution adopted with the support of a two-thirds majority? We need to rethink effective multilateralism vis-à-vis an effective United Nations system to make the United Nations a true cornerstone of hope and faith for the people.

I wonder, even after having a decision from the General Assembly and after having numerous resolutions from the Security Council: what else do we need to implement the two-State solution within the pre-1967 borders?

Once again, we would like to refer to the dire humanitarian need in Gaza and the desire to keep border crossings open for humanitarian aid to enter Gaza to facilitate the opening of additional crossings. We also urge the donors who have suspended funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to reverse those decisions. We cannot overemphasize the critical role of UNRWA in saving the lives of the innocent.

Before concluding, we condemn the war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity committed by Israel, and also denounced any attempt to dislocate the Palestinians from Gaza. We are looking forward to an expedited investigation by the International Criminal

Court of the crimes committed in Gaza and reiterate the need for an immediate and effective implementation of the provisional measures indicated by the International Court of Justice on 26 January 2024.

Mr. Segura Aragón (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): El Salvador would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this plenary debate through a mechanism that we consider essential for strengthening the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council.

My country would like to align itself with the statement delivered by Liechtenstein yesterday (see A/78/PV.59).

One hundred and fifty days on from the beginning of the conflict, El Salvador very much regrets that the General Assembly is having to meet once again owing to the failure of the Security Council to fulfil the responsibility incumbent upon it, namely to maintain international peace and security. Today we are discussing the use of the veto, a mechanism that we feel to be anachronistic and that, we would reiterate, works to the detriment of the effectiveness and the credibility of both the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole. It is that mechanism that, for the sixth time, has prevented the Security Council from calling for a ceasefire, which is an indispensable condition for mitigating the human suffering and widespread destruction in Gaza.

We wish to take this opportunity to express our deepest concern about the events in the Al-Nabulsi roundabout on 29 February. El Salvador firmly condemns all acts of violence against civilians and extends its condolences to the families and loved ones of the victims of this new incident in a conflict that has already claimed the lives of more than 30,000 people. What happened that day must not happen again under any circumstances. The necessary measures to protect the civilian population and civilian infrastructure must be adopted urgently. There is a need to allow for, facilitate and enable the immediate, sustained and unimpeded delivery of large-scale humanitarian assistance to the civilian population throughout the Gaza Strip, in a context in which 2.2 million Palestinians are facing alarming levels of acute food insecurity. All available routes, including border crossings, must be used. Obligations under international law must be complied with, and Security Council and General Assembly resolutions must be implemented fully. The civilian population in the Gaza Strip must be provided with

all essential services and the humanitarian assistance required for survival.

My country echoes the demand for an immediate ceasefire. We deplore all attacks and acts of violence against the civilian population. We reject the forced displacement of the Palestinian civilian population, in violation of international law. In its most recent escalation, this conflict has destroyed thousands of homes and left millions of people homeless. Respect for and the protection of all civilian and humanitarian facilities must be ensured. We also demand once again that all hostages be released immediately and unconditionally and that humanitarian access to them be guaranteed in order to attend to their medical needs.

We echo the call on countries that have suspended financing for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to urgently reconsider their decisions in order to guarantee the continuity of the Agency's vital humanitarian operations. We reaffirm that the two-State solution is the only way to put an end to this long-standing conflict and to achieve reconciliation and peace in the Middle East.

Today more than ever, preventing a new regional escalation is vital. We therefore call upon all parties to act with the utmost restraint, and we once again call upon all those with influence over the parties to work to achieve that goal. We recall that the General Assembly adopted resolutions ES-10/21 and ES-10/22, that the Secretary-General addressed a letter to the Security Council invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations (S/2023/962) and that the International Court of Justice has already ordered provisional measures. The Security Council must respond urgently to the violations of international law and human rights. That is its legal, political and moral responsibility.

In conclusion, I would like to state that the veto of a permanent member of the Security Council cannot and must not curb the determination of the majority of Member States to establish a ceasefire and to put an end to the war. The international community must continue to make every possible effort to give the population of Gaza the opportunity to achieve peace.

Mr. Beleffi (San Marino): The 151 days of violence that we continue to witness in the Middle East are causing deep suffering and destruction. This crisis requires a prompt and strong response from the international community in order to put an end to

civilian suffering and prevent further loss of life in Gaza. San Marino strongly supports the efforts by the United States, Egypt and Qatar to reach an agreement on the release of hostages and a temporary ceasefire and to ensure a sustained end to the hostilities.

San Marino reiterates its condemnation of the horrible terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October 2023, calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, condemns the torture and sexual violence perpetrated against hostages and recognizes Israel's right to defend itself, in line with international human rights law. All parties must comply with their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law, especially as they relate to the protection of civilians, civilian infrastructure, medical facilities, schools and United Nations headquarters. There must be accountability for violations of international law perpetrated by all sides.

The Palestinian population cannot be blamed, given that the terrorist attacks are acts that were committed by Hamas. The scale of military operations and the current humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and the demolitions in the West Bank constitute violations of international humanitarian law. San Marino is concerned about a possible ground operation in Rafah, which must be avoided because of the potential catastrophic humanitarian consequences for more than 1 million Palestinians, who are currently there sheltering from the fighting. San Marino calls for the immediate implementation of Security Council resolutions 2720 (2023) and 2712 (2023). Rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access is an obligation under international law. It is essential to ensure that urgent humanitarian aid quickly reaches the Palestinian population, which is stranded in the Gaza Strip in desperate conditions. In that regard, we commend the irreplaceable work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the only United Nations agency capable of conducting the entire humanitarian response in Gaza.

San Marino deplores the death of an unprecedented number of United Nations staff, other humanitarian workers and journalists. We call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and a return to dialogue that fully guarantees the right of the State of Israel and the legitimate aspirations and rights of the Palestinian people. San Marino remains committed to a lasting and sustainable peace based on the two-State solution and supports the holding of an international peace

conference under United Nations auspices, which should involve parties representing the international community. The international community must break this terrible cycle of violence and recommit to a lasting peace, restoring hope and security to Israelis and Palestinians through a renewed peace process.

The time for the Security Council to discharge its mandate is now. The United Nations must continue to be a beacon for the safeguarding of peace and human rights.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the League of Arab States.

Mr. Abdelaziz (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express to the President of the General Assembly that the League of Arab States deeply appreciates him and his outstanding presidency of the Assembly at its current session. We also appreciate him convening this important meeting within the framework of the General Assembly's oversight of the use of the veto at the Security Council meeting of 20 February (see S/PV.9552) to vote on the Arab-Algerian draft resolution (S/2024/173).

I also would like to align myself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Yemen on behalf of the Group of Arab States in New York (see A/78/PV.59).

The brutal Israeli war, which the Netanyahu extremist Government is using as a method to perpetrate the genocide of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, has entered its twentieth week and its 150th day, attesting to the suffering of the people in Gaza, who are being subjected to constant bombardment, brutal destruction, forced displacement, war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. Such crimes have been and continue to be perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, under the false pretext that it is exercising its right to self-defence, despite the fact that that right is neither legally nor religiously applicable in cases involving the occupation of the territory of others by force and definitely does not apply to the Palestinian resistance against the brutal Israeli occupation.

Compounding the gravity of the situation is the fact that more than 30,000 Palestinians have been martyred and nearly 80,000 have been maimed and partially or totally disabled as a result of the aerial bombardment and the systematic military operations carried out by the Israeli army forces against Gaza. These operations are being carried out in pursuit of the chimera of

eliminating Hamas or the Palestinian resistance to the occupation, deploying technological equipment and advanced lethal weapons that the United States and Israel's other allies and supporters continue to supply.

The League of Arab States is confident that the United States will not succeed in justifying its use of the veto for the fourth time against a draft resolution that includes a provision for a ceasefire (S/2024/173), especially as that draft resolution refers to the deteriorating humanitarian condition, verging on famine, with genocide being the aim. That situation prompted the International Court of Justice to issue an order containing provisional measures to protect the Palestinian people from the genocide — measures that Israel refuses to implement on the ground.

The United States is seeking only a humanitarian pause, with the aim of securing the release of the Israeli hostages by any means through direct negotiations outside of the United Nations. However, the absence of the Security Council and the General Assembly from the deal means only further intransigence on the part of Israel, which is why no agreement has thus far been reached, all of which leaves the door open to an Israeli ground military invasion of the city of Rafah, which would entail catastrophic forced displacement akin to that of the Nakba of 1948 and unprecedented regional tension, which could lead to further wars in the Arab region.

It is shameful that the United States vetoed the Arab-Algerian draft resolution. That has emboldened the far-right Government in Tel Aviv to push for the adoption of an illegal resolution in the Knesset to deny the Palestinian people their inalienable rights, foremost among which is their right to establish an independent State in implementation of the two-State solution. Israel has thus also been emboldened to expand its military operations, which led to a further humanitarian disaster at the Al-Nabulsi roundabout on 29 February, claiming the lives of 100 Palestinian martyrs and wounding 750 others. All of those people had been awaiting the delivery of humanitarian aid. The Council's response was limited to issuing a press statement that did not hold Israel responsible, despite documented reports to the contrary from United Nations organizations and offices.

Absent any prospects of a political settlement of the Palestinian question, and given Israel's provocative drive to destroy the foundations of a peaceful

settlement and impose new facts on the ground through military force, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries warned at the summit level of a further deterioration of the situation on the ground in Palestine as a result of major Powers' disregard for the peace process and its foundations and the Arab Peace Initiative. Against that backdrop, it is imperative that the General Assembly impose its vision and come up with a package of effective executive measures to replace the resolutions that we failed to adopt in the Security Council.

Those measures would include adopting an effective mechanism to protect the Palestinian people throughout the occupied Palestinian territory in line with the Secretary-General's proposals; imposing United Nations sanctions on members of the far-right Israeli Government and similar United Nations sanctions on Israeli settlers who violate resolution 2334 (2016) on a daily basis; imposing an embargo on all arms exports from all countries to Israel, following the example of a number of European countries that have taken such measures to prevent a further deterioration of the ongoing humanitarian tragedy; and considering the suspension of Israel's participation in the work of the General Assembly and even its membership in the United Nations for not being a peace-loving State that fulfils the basic conditions of membership. All of that would aim to eliminate the impunity with which the United States and its allies have allowed Israel to act through the use of the veto against resolutions of international legitimacy, especially given that the International Court of Justice has ordered provisional measures, which Israel has thus far failed to implement.

In conclusion, it is time for the General Assembly to adopt a resolution that makes the independent State of Palestine a full member of the United Nations pursuant to the provisions of resolution 181 (II). It is high time that the resolution be implemented both in the Security Council and in the General Assembly so that the State of Palestine becomes a full and active member of the United Nations at the earliest opportunity.

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

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 63.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.