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Official Records

President: Mr. Francis (Trinidad and Tobago)

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

Agenda item 63 (continued)

Use of the veto

Special report of the Security Council (A/78/832)

The President: The General Assembly will resume its consideration of agenda item 63, entitled “Use of the veto”, to hold a debate, pursuant to resolution 76/262 of 26 April 2022, on the situation as to which the veto was cast by two permanent members at the 9584th meeting of the Security Council, on 22 March 2024, under the agenda item entitled “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”.

Statement by the President

The President: Today’s debate, which was convened in the context of the veto initiative, is a clear demonstration that two principal organs of the United Nations — the General Assembly and the Security Council — can and do work together to maintain international peace and security. Ultimately, those two principal organs serve the same purpose, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, namely, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. While I support the thrust of the veto initiative as a pioneering tool for transparency and accountability, I express deep regret that we must routinely employ it due to the perennial inability of the Security Council to speak with one voice on matters of grave international importance

and sensitivity in relation to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Once again, we convene under the veto initiative as conflict in the Gaza Strip rages into its sixth bloody month, as death and destruction rule the day and as divisions among Member States, especially in the Council, persist. With that foremost in our minds, I again call on Member States to approach today’s debate in a sincere spirit of cooperation, mindful that the Assembly, as the world’s parliament, also has the singular priority to prevent further bloodshed and save lives.

The conflict in Gaza is a blight on our common humanity. Unparalleled in its intensity, brutality and scope, in the words of United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths, its mounting numbers speak to the horrors of life in the Gaza Strip, with more than 32,500 Palestinians killed, a majority of them women and children, more than 75,000 injured and 1.7 million displaced, a majority of them multiple times. On top of that, more than 1.1 million people are at a catastrophic Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 5 level of food insecurity. Gaza is being pushed into a wholly preventable famine. Since 7 October, 173 staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) have been killed — the highest number of United Nations staff killed in any conflict anywhere.

Against that backdrop, on 24 March the Israeli authorities informed the United Nations that they will no

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longer approve full UNRWA convoys to northern Gaza. To be clear, that constitutes a deliberate obstruction of life-saving aid, and it will have only one result, which is a growing number of preventable deaths. I urgently appeal to the Israeli authorities to reverse the decision. The average number of 159 aid trucks crossing into Gaza per day is well below operational capacity and indeed humanitarian necessity, considering that 500 trucks of humanitarian supplies are required to serve those in need. With starvation spreading and increasing reports of the demise of children as a result, it is incumbent on Israel to urgently and exponentially scale up, guarantee and maintain uninterrupted humanitarian access.

The demands of the international community, as expressed by an overwhelming majority in the General Assembly on more than one occasion, have been clear. An immediate humanitarian ceasefire must be secured. All parties must comply with their obligations under international law. All hostages must be immediately and unconditionally released, and unhindered humanitarian access must be ensured without conditions. While I welcome the Security Council's resolution 2728 (2024), demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza for the month of Ramadan, as an important and highly responsible step in the right direction, it comes after five painful months of division, bloodshed and unconscionable loss. The misery in Gaza has only endured. What the people of Gaza need is an unconditional ceasefire.

On 26 March, Yusuf Ghaben, a father of nine, was one of 12 people drowned off Gaza's north-west coast in a desperate attempt to reach and secure food aid to feed his children. On that same day, the world also heard the harrowing account of Amit Soussana, an Israeli woman who was violently abducted from her home on 7 October and held in captivity for 55 days. Today we are also mourning the unspeakable loss of seven World Central Kitchen volunteers, ruthlessly killed last week by an air strike while they were travelling through a deconflicted zone bringing food to the starving. No one — I repeat, no one — should need to swim to retrieve food while food convoys are lined up outside the gate waiting to be let in. No one should ever know the hell of being kidnapped indefinitely, and no family should have to endure the anguish of waiting for news of a loved one's fate. No humanitarian worker should ever be the target of an air strike, and especially outrageously, an air strike in an area meant for safe passage. It cannot and must not be the case that our politics are too slow to catch up to these sobering realities. We cannot normalize things around such shameful disconnects.

With tomorrow marking the end of Ramadan, millions around the world will celebrate Eid in the safety of their homes, while Gazans will again offer prayers on the ruins of mosques and their obliterated homes. I implore Security Council members to make meaningful use of their power in support of an immediate and, importantly, a lasting ceasefire on the ground. We have enough stories of death and division to fill the history books for generations. Unless we demonstrate genuine political will and embrace these lives universally as our own, those stories of pain and suffering will be all we have. I urge all who have leverage to do all in their power to end the bloodshed in Gaza now. Let us see an end to waiting, including for a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in line with a two-State solution, as the only credible formula for a lasting settlement.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The authors of the initiative enabling the General Assembly to discuss instances of the use of the right of the veto in the Security Council unquestionably envisaged it as a unique means of censure and to draw attention to alleged abuse by permanent members of the Security Council. Today, however, we are dealing with a situation when the Russian Federation and China's veto clearly prevented the adoption of a draft resolution (S/2024/239) that not only was not aimed at ending the military activity in Gaza but essentially gave Israel carte blanche to continue its inhumane operations in the Gaza Strip, which contravene international humanitarian law. The draft resolution that our American colleagues attempted to force the Council to adopt on 22 March through machinations and blackmail not only did not contain a direct demand or even a call for a ceasefire, but it effectively gave a unique "licence to kill" Palestinians in the future.

That was the point of the vague and deceptive wording about determining "the imperative of [a] ... ceasefire". That is, while the Israelis continue to deliberately and ruthlessly cleanse Gaza of Palestinians, killing humanitarian workers and destroying hospitals, homes and schools, it essentially proposed that the Security Council, the main organ for the maintenance of international peace and security, stand aside and confine itself to philosophical musings about the importance of a ceasefire in principle, which Israel would certainly interpret as a green light for its reckless and ruthless actions.

It is telling that the draft resolution proposed by the United States also allowed for the possibility for Israel to continue its future operations, provided that minimal harm was done to civilians. In the context of Israel's transparent plans to invade Rafah and the horrific number of casualties since the beginning of the conflict, including women and children, the draft resolution proposed by the United States was shocking in its cynicism. It is also important to understand that the adoption of the draft resolution proposed by the United States would essentially have ended the discussion of the unconditional demand for a ceasefire in Gaza, and that is of course what West Jerusalem was counting on.

Against the backdrop of the horrific escalation in the Gaza Strip, with more than 32,000 civilian casualties, neither my delegation nor our Algerian and Chinese colleagues could allow that to happen. As permanent members of the Security Council, we bear a historic responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and it is specifically for that purpose that the veto mechanism exists, in order to prevent the imposition of harmful and dangerous initiatives at the Security Council that not only fail to eliminate risks to international peace and security, but also generate new risks. Indeed, subsequent developments showed that our decision to exercise the veto was the only correct way to proceed. It allowed the Council to adopt resolution 2728 (2024) three days later, following its submission by the 10 non-permanent members of the Security Council, at the heart of which was a direct demand for the immediate establishment of a ceasefire for the period of Ramadan, leading ultimately to a lasting ceasefire.

We believe that situation is the best response to those who, in the context of the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform, criticize the veto right held by the five permanent members of the security. By casting a veto, Russia stood up for genuine multilateral diplomacy, categorically repudiating the latest attempts by the United States to impose a one-sided destructive approach towards Gaza. Instead of adopting the harmful draft resolution proposed by the United States, by adopting resolution 2728 (2024) the Council provided a glimmer of hope to everyone who condemns the ruthless annihilation being carried out by the Israeli military machine using weapons and munitions received from the United States.

It would seem that, six months after the beginning of the escalation, during which time the United States

erected countless obstacles, the Security Council was able to meet the responsibility entrusted to it. However, it was premature to celebrate. Washington, which encountered heated criticism from Israel, immediately labelled resolution 2728 (2024) as being non-binding, which once again could provide West Jerusalem with a loophole to continue the operation in Gaza. In other words, a permanent member of the Security Council, which plays a specific role in the maintenance of peace and security, cast a veto four times in order to prevent a demand for an immediate ceasefire, and now states that it is possible not to implement Security Council resolutions. That is all in the spirit of the rules-based order or even Orwell's *Animal Farm*, which states that all animals are equal but some of them are more equal than others. That irresponsible policy of our United States colleagues deserves discussion by the General Assembly and deserves its censure. There is a great need to send both West Jerusalem and Washington a clear message about the unacceptability of their actions in Gaza.

The tragedy in Palestine is unfolding before our very eyes. Unfortunately, there is no reason to rule out the possibility that the worst may be yet to come. The Israeli authorities have announced their intention to invade Rafah, where more than 1.5 million Palestinians, including 600,000 children, densely populate a small area of land. That would result in a hitherto unforeseen humanitarian tragedy and we must do everything possible to prevent it.

What needs to be done to prevent such senseless slaughter? The Security Council, thanks to Russia's and China's veto, has spoken out on the matter. All parties to the conflict need to comply in full with all three Security Council resolutions adopted since the current escalation of the Palestinians-Israeli conflict. Those resolutions are geared towards establishing the cessation of hostilities in Gaza, ensuring full-fledged humanitarian access for peaceful civilians in the Gaza Strip and the release of all hostages and Palestinians illegally held in prisons. At the same time, there is an important need to bear in mind that the Security Council, pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations, has all the necessary mechanisms, including sanctions, to ensure that its decisions are enforced, if the situation so requires. For now, there is a need to meaningfully and without delay seek a way to achieve a political solution geared towards a long-term resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the well-known international legal basis.

We believe that the peaceful coexistence of two States, Israel and Palestine, with the latter's capital in East Jerusalem uniting the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, is the key to peace in the Middle East. We stand ready to work proactively to make that formula — which is the only possible solution — a reality. In that regard, Russia fully supports the initiative on the Palestinian side to reopen consideration of its application for full-fledged membership at the United Nations.

The fate of that application will be a yardstick of the state of humankind and civilization in the modern-day world. How long is humankind willing to turn a blind eye to the most protracted conflict on our planet? Is the international community willing to recognize the Palestinians as equals, recognize rights to life, to their land and to take ownership of their faith? We hope so. We urge the entire international community to support Palestine's application for membership at the United Nations.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China, together with Algeria and Russia, voted on 22 March against draft resolution S/2024/239, on the situation in Gaza, submitted by the United States. China's decision was based on the need to uphold international justice, the purposes and dignity of the Charter of the United Nations and the responsibility and authority of the Security Council. It also took fully into account the grave concerns and strong dissatisfaction of the Arab States with the draft resolution.

Since the outbreak of the Gaza conflict, the international community has been calling overwhelmingly for a ceasefire and an end to the fighting, while urgently expecting the Security Council to take concrete actions. However, the United States, as a country with significant influence over the party concerned, has repeatedly obstructed the Council's voice on the ceasefire and has cast a veto four times against the Council's efforts to promote an immediate ceasefire. Subsequently, the United States submitted a draft resolution that plays with words and is ambiguous on the core issue of ceasefire. Holding the Council hostage in order to endorse its erroneous policy by setting preconditions for a ceasefire, the draft resolution submitted by the United States deviates from the consensus of Council members and runs counter to the expectations of the international community. If adopted, it would have meant that the killings in Gaza would continue, along with the vicious acts of violating international law and international humanitarian law.

China had no hesitation in exercising its veto against a draft resolution that would have had such serious consequences. As a permanent member of the Security Council, China has stepped up to shoulder its responsibilities and has won the broad support of the international community. Facts have proven that it was because China and the relevant countries adhered to the principles of justice and the resolute exercise of the veto that the United States eventually realized that it was no longer able to continue to stop the Security Council from moving in the right direction and taking crucial steps. That cleared the way for the Council's subsequent adoption of resolution 2728 (2024) calling for an immediate ceasefire, which was proposed by the 10 non-permanent members of the Council. China's exercise of the veto is consistent with the efforts of an overwhelming majority of Council members and can stand the test of history.

More than five months after the outbreak of the conflict in Gaza, resolution 2728 (2024) is the first resolution adopted by the Security Council that calls explicitly for an immediate ceasefire. The most urgent task facing us right now is its full implementation. The Council's resolutions are binding and must be fully implemented. That is an obligation under the Charter and a commitment that all countries make when they join the United Nations. It is unquestionable and not to be challenged. Unbelievably, the minute that resolution 2728 (2024) was adopted, the representative of the United States claimed that it was not binding. We should not be seeing such actions and words from a permanent member of the Security Council. They are a betrayal of its responsibilities as a member of the Council and seriously undermine its authority and credibility. In that connection, we urge Israel to take the fulfilment of its obligations as a Member State seriously and comply effectively with the Council's resolutions. Israel must immediately cease its military attacks on Gaza and its collective punishment of its people. The blockade of Gaza and all artificial obstacles to humanitarian access must be immediately lifted, with all land crossings fully open.

We hereby urge the United States, as a permanent member of the Security Council, to genuinely assume its responsibilities, uphold the Council's authority and implement resolution 2728 (2024) in good faith, as well as promoting Israel's full implementation of it. We support the Council in taking further necessary action in the light of developments in the situation. If its resolutions are not implemented in a timely and effective

manner and the Gaza conflict continues to drag on, we are deeply concerned about the possibility that its negative spillover effects will continue to intensify.

China strongly condemns the recent air strikes on Iranian diplomatic premises in Syria. Such attacks on diplomatic institutions are flagrant violations of international law. Not only are they entirely unacceptable, they also greatly increase the risk of situations in the region spiralling out of control.

The essence of the prolonged Palestinian-Israeli issue is that a two-State solution has not been realized. China supports Palestine in becoming a full-fledged Member of the United Nations. Palestine has asked the Security Council to resume its consideration of its application, and China supports swift action by the Council on the matter.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): The General Assembly called for a cessation of hostilities 20 days after the start of the Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip, six months ago today. By an overwhelming majority, the Assembly demanded an immediate humanitarian ceasefire a month later, stressing the need to protect the Palestinian civilian population and halt what was already a dire humanitarian catastrophe. It has taken the Security Council almost six months to do the same thing. Now their resolutions have to be fully respected and implemented so that the genocide in Gaza can stop, so that families on both sides can reunite in life rather than death, so that the criminal use of famine as a weapon of war can cease and so that the bloodletting and untold human suffering can end. Israel has besieged, bombed, starved and displaced an entire civilian population. Nothing justifies the commission of such atrocities, neither the laws of nature nor those of men.

Let me say this as clearly as I can. Impunity kills. Impunity kills children, women and men and deprives them of security, dignity and life. If Israel thought that it would be held accountable, it would never have killed 33,000 Palestinians, maimed 75,000 or destroyed Gaza from north to south. It would not have killed journalists, United Nations staff, aid workers or medical personnel. It would not have disappeared thousands upon thousands of people. It would not have killed 14,000 children. So many children have been killed, crippled, orphaned or displaced, over and over again. Israel's listing was long

overdue before this last horrific assault on Gaza. It is now self-evident and inevitable.

When will the victims, rather than the perpetrators, finally receive protection and support? I am asking everyone to stop arming Israel, all of the countries that have been providing Israel with weapons and ammunition so that it can kill our children and women and Palestinian civilians. I am asking everyone to stop arming Israel and trading with settlements, and to hold accountable not the colonized but those responsible for the massacres — not only individuals, but those responsible at the highest level for these illegal and inhumane policies. We were repeatedly asked to choose between justice and peace, and we got neither. There is no path to peace with such injustice or with impunity for Israel. Once that has gone, we will see that peace is finally within our reach.

There is a question I must ask. Should Israel be sitting among us in this Hall as if nothing had happened? Should it be taking the floor and addressing Members with the arrogance of a colonizer, sure of its right to occupy and kill? How is it that the party colonizing and committing genocide can be a full Member of the United Nations, while the party committed to the rule of international law and just and lasting peace cannot? Have we not waited long enough, suffered enough and endured enough? Do United Nations Member States want us to be a fellow Member State? The answer is obvious — a resounding yes. They want us to be a full Member State just as they are, to sit with them. They would welcome that. An overwhelming majority of States Members have repeatedly expressed their support for Palestine's full membership, as an integral part of their support for our independence. Why are we therefore not a full Member? Why do we continue to be excluded from the family of nations?

The United Nations is governed by the Charter of the United Nations. It is guided by international law and was established to serve its rule. Legislation that aims to deny us membership, to deny us justice, to deny us representation and the exercise of our inalienable rights on an equal footing with all other nations, is unjust. All we ask is to take our rightful place among the community of nations, to be treated as equals with other nations and States, to live in freedom and dignity and in peace and security in our ancestral land. Recognition of the State of Palestine and its membership are not enough by themselves to end that illegal occupation.

However, they represent the first step towards reaching that urgent and long overdue goal.

Stop the genocide, ensure accountability, recognize Palestine and support its membership at the United Nations. Mobilize for Palestine freedom, and we shall achieve peace, all of us together.

Mr. Erdan (Israel): Since well before the establishment of the United Nations or the State of Israel, the Palestinians' goal has been clear — the annihilation of the Jews. Hajj Amin Al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and one of the founding fathers of Palestinian nationalism, worked hand in hand with Hitler to achieve that. From that time until today, the root of the conflict has not changed. It is not a political conflict or about partitioning land. It is solely about the destruction of Israel and the murder of Jews. Yet today the United Nations refuses to see that, or prefers to act like an ostrich, burying its head in the ground out of distorted political interests. We just heard some of those political interests being expressed here in this Hall.

The United Nations was established in the wake of the Second World War to prevent atrocities such as the Holocaust, but the same genocidal ideology that the Organization was founded to combat is still prevalent among the Palestinians. What the Palestinians are indoctrinated with, even through their official media channels, and what they are brainwashed with in their schools and educational materials, is no different from the antisemitic propaganda of Nazi Germany's *Der Stürmer*. That is what they learned. You have to be blind not to see it. We all saw it in live action on 7 October 2023, when Hamas carried out their massacre. Hamas publicly states their affiliation with genocidal Jew hatred and Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. His book was found in many houses in Gaza. But it is not only Hamas — Fatah and the Palestinian Authority also refuse to recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish State, because they share the same genocidal ideology. Not only has President Abbas not even condemned the 7 October massacre, but the Palestinian Authority is paying monthly salaries to all the terrorists that took part in the 7 October massacre — all of them.

The Palestinian terrorists, whether in Gaza or in Ramallah, seek one thing — the destruction of Israel, full destruction. Yet the United Nations, the Organization founded to prevent Nazi ideology from spreading, has committed itself to reinforcing modern day Nazi jihadists. Today, breaking the Guinness World

Record for rewarding terror, the United Nations is now, in complete violation of the Charter of the United Nations, considering forcing the establishment of a Palestinian terrorist State — yes, to force it.

That will not be a regular State, it will be a Palestinian Nazi State — an entity that achieved statehood despite being committed to terror and Israel's annihilation. If Hitler were alive today, he would be singing the United Nations praises. If that happens, the United Nations will be remembered as an Organization that has been hijacked by dictators and human rights violators, an Organization that rewards Nazi-like monsters. Yesterday we commemorated six months since the 7 October massacre. Hamas carried out the most heinous and widespread massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. Entire families were wiped from the Earth, and peaceful communities were turned to ash. Israeli women were the victims of systemic rape, and more than 250 hostages were taken by Hamas to Gaza. We even have with us, in this very Hall, a delegation of wounded soldiers who courageously battled that sheer evil in Gaza. Those are true heroes, who fought in defence of our future, and I salute them. Yet today we are not meeting to condemn Hamas's atrocities; we are not meeting to condemn Hamas. We are meeting here for the sole reason that certain members of the Security Council — and General Assembly members heard them — refused to even accept a condemnation of child-murdering rapists and they vetoed it. What a disgrace.

In a sane world, uncorrupted by despicable political interests, today, six months after the gates of Hell were opened upon innocent Israelis, the United Nations would be holding a vigil for the victims and an international conference to secure the release of the hostages. Resolutions would be adopted condemning Hamas. The Security Council would meet to designate Hamas as the terror organization that it is and sanction any country that aids arms and harbours those terrorists. But sadly, we do not live in a sane world, and the United Nations is more morally corrupt than ever.

Six months have passed since the massacre, and not a single United Nations body, not even one, not the General Assembly, the Security Council or any other United Nations organ, has even condemned Hamas. Not a single meeting has been dedicated to our hostages. That is insane. Almost 1,200 Israelis were murdered in the most barbaric ways, slaughtered like vermin, while for six months 133 hostages have been held — six

months of being beaten, tortured, abused and raped. Rockets are raining down on Israeli towns and cities every day now, forcing millions to rush back and forth into bomb shelters. Yet to the United Nations, Israeli suffering means nothing. I am asking Members to imagine how they would feel if their daughter was Noa Argamani or Naama Levy, beautiful girls held hostage by terrorists for half a year, enduring unspeakable horrors. Or how they would feel if their son was Rom Braslavski, a courageous hero who spent hours saving others at the Nova Music Festival before being taken hostage by Hamas, and who is still there. Or how they would feel if their father was Amiram Cooper, a loving grandfather who was violently abducted to Gaza. By the way, Amiram is 84 years old. What kind of monsters kidnap an 84-year-old man? And everyone here is silent. These are all people with stories, lives and loved ones, and the United Nations has done nothing, absolutely nothing, to ensure their release. Shame on it.

This body has forgotten the founding purpose of the United Nations, so I will remind everyone. As it says in Article 1 of the Charter, one of the purposes of the United Nations is

“[t]o maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression”.

Instead of removing threats, the Assembly has spent the past six months emphasizing threats and ignoring the breach of the peace that is the gravest of all, the holding of innocent Israeli hostages by rapist terrorists. The Red Cross has not even visited them. Can anyone here imagine that? The Assembly has not established a reporting mechanism for them or demanded that the Secretary-General present a weekly outline of what he has done to advance their release. It has done zero. Why is the General Assembly so morally distorted?

None of the resolutions adopted in this Hall or in the Security Council have made a ceasefire conditional on the release of the hostages, and it is clear why. I apologize again for my language, but no one here gives a damn about the Israeli hostages or Israeli lives generally. After six months have passed, all that the United Nations is focused on is the situation in Gaza and on a ceasefire. Zero action has been taken for the sake of the hostages, while there has been 100 per cent dedication to aiding the mobs of Gazans who supported and celebrated the Hamas Nazis. We saw how they celebrated the kidnapping while publicly beating and

spitting on the victims who were brought to Gaza. A ceasefire with no conditions is an assurance from the United Nations that Hamas can regroup and rearm and recommit their actions of 7 October, just as they have vowed to do. It is very telling that the first parties to praise the Security Council's resolution on a ceasefire (resolution 2728 (2024)) were — surprise — Hamas and the ayatollah regime in Tehran, the number-one State sponsor of terrorism, because the policy of the United Nations gives the jihadists carte blanche for genocide. That is how low the Organization has fallen.

Six months after the massacre, there are no vigils. There are no condemnations of Hamas, and right now the Security Council is busy discussing the recognition of a Palestinian Nazi State instead of designating Hamas a terror organization. That will be the vilest reward of the vilest crimes. The Council is deliberating on whether to grant the perpetrators and supporters of 7 October full membership status in the United Nations. We just heard that. The very fact that the discussion is even being held is already a victory for genocidal terror. Following 9/11, could anyone fathom giving Al-Qaida international legitimacy and status? What will be the next step — considering the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham for United Nations membership? Six months after Hamas invaded Israel to rape, murder and devastate, in an atrocity 20 times bigger than 9/11, the United Nations is sending a clear message to all the jihadist terrorists in the Palestinian Authority and around the world. Its message is that the United Nations will consider the demands of those who commit massacres and atrocities, no matter how radical they are. What kind of sick, twisted logic is that? If the Council chooses to advance that prize for barbarism, it no longer deserves to be called the Security Council. It will forever be known as the Terror Council.

There has been no greater reward for evil throughout history. Let me remind everyone that the basic requirements for a State's admission to the United Nations are first, a permanent population, secondly, a defined territory, thirdly, a defined Government and fourthly, the capacity to enter into relations with other States. And a very important principle, stated in Article 4 of the Charter, is that “[m]embership in the United Nations is open to all ... peace-loving States”. “Peace-loving” — nothing is clearer than the fact that the Palestinians fail to meet these criteria. The Palestinian Authority has absolutely no control over Gaza. We all know it. In 2007, after Gazans voted Hamas terrorists into power, Hamas proceeded to hunt down and murder

every representative of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza, throwing some off rooftops in public executions.

But even in Judea and Samaria, entire neighbourhoods and cities are ruled by other terrorist gangs, and the Palestinian Authority, ironically, has no authority. While that in itself is grounds enough to reject this sick reward for Palestinian terror, the Palestinian Authority is itself the antithesis of a peace-loving entity. Again, everyone here knows it. As I said, President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority not only have not condemned the attack, but they are paying monthly salaries to all the terrorists who took part in the 7 October massacre. This is a genocide-loving entity that deserves no status here. Neither the Assembly nor the Council wishes to tackle the root of the problem. And the root of the problem is that what is needed is demilitarizing and deradicalizing the Palestinian Authority and Gaza, just as was done in Germany after the fall of the Nazis. And until the Palestinians' culture of hate ceases, there is no possibility of any solution. And after 7 October, the deradicalization of Palestinian society is a non-negotiable demand for Israel. Its culture of hate must be stopped.

The Palestinian Authority has been paying terrorists for their murderous terror attacks for many years. That is not customary. It is Palestinian legislation. According to Palestinian law, Palestinian terrorists are paid monthly salaries for murdering Israelis. Everyone here should internalize that. Those salaries can reach thousands of dollars each month, and they are on a rising scale. The longer the prison sentence someone gets, the higher the salary. If people murder more Jews, they get more money. That is the Palestinian Authority's despicable pay-for-slay act. Everyone here should read it. "Peace-loving", indeed — maybe in this morally bankrupt Organization.

In conclusion, the family of every Hamas terrorist killed on 7 October and since then will begin receiving monthly payments, along with all the terrorists that Israel has arrested since that date. That is a pure incentive to murder Israelis, and it is continuing as we speak, as the Assembly contemplates giving terrorists a State. And one last reason that their request should not be supported is that granting the Palestinians statehood is not only a blatant violation of the United Nations Charter but also violates the fundamental principle of reaching a lasting solution at the negotiating table. It is a clear message to the Palestinians that their constant rejectionism and boycotting of negotiations paid off.

There is nothing that perpetuates a conflict more than one side believing that they can force their demands on the other side through a third party, which is the United Nations. And that is exactly what the United Nations discussion to unilaterally grant the Palestinians a State does. It perpetuates the conflict.

That is what this Organization has been doing for years, sadly. Even before the United Nations was born, before it was established, the Arabs refused to accept the notion of a Jewish State on any borders. We saw that with the Peel Commission in 1937; the United Nations partition plan here in 1947, which, was rejected by the Palestinians after Camp David in 2000; Prime Minister Olmert's offer in 2008, in relation to the Obama initiative in 2014; and Trump's "deal of the century" in 2020. Every time a peace plan was presented, the Palestinians' response was to reject it outright. That is not because the offers were not generous — they were — it is because the offers included the existence of Israel, and to the Palestinians the only solution is a solution in which the Jewish State ceases to exist. But instead of pressuring them to negotiate to come to terms with Israel's existence, the United Nations prefers to take a unilateral approach and to cast away the negotiating table and ram a Palestinian State down Israel's throat. That is not how you resolve a conflict, that is how you ensure more bloodshed, more violence and many more 7 Octobers. All members of the Assembly remember how, after Israel withdrew and disengaged from Gaza in 2005, Hamas turned every inch of the Strip into an Iranian terror stronghold.

We will not let the same thing happen in Judea and Samaria, what you call the West Bank — never. An agreement can be agreed upon only at the negotiating table, not by forcing it unilaterally here. Israel has achieved peace. We achieved peace with Egypt, with Jordan, with the United Arab Emirates, with Bahrain, with Morocco. It was achieved through dialogue, and negotiations, not because it was forced by a third party. The United Nations, sadly, has been sabotaging peace in the Middle East for years. Six months have passed since Hamas genocidal ideology became a reality, yet rather than condemn the terrorists, the United Nations seeks to reward them. This is the United Nations' lowest moment, a moment of shame, disgrace and complete moral bankruptcy. It is a moment that will never be forgotten.

The President: I now give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of New Zealand.

Mr. Peters (New Zealand): The situation in Gaza is an utter catastrophe. New Zealand condemns Hamas for its heinous terrorist attacks on 7 October 2023 and since, including its barbaric violations of women and children. All of us here must demand a mass release of all remaining hostages immediately. At the same time, the facts on the ground in Gaza are absolutely clear. More than 32,000 people have been killed. Millions have been displaced. Warning rings in our ears that famine in Gaza is imminent. Indeed, Palestinian civilian continue to bear the brunt of Israel's military actions. Humanitarian and medical workers are being killed, and health facilities and vital infrastructure have been destroyed. Gaza, which was already facing huge challenges from this conflict, is now a wasteland. Worse still, another generation of young Palestinians, already scarred by violence, is being further traumatized.

Since the start of the current crisis in Gaza, the veto has been used five times to prevent the Security Council from acting decisively. That has seen the Council fail in its responsibility to maintain international peace and security. New Zealand is a long-standing opponent of the use of the veto. We have actively supported the veto initiative from its inception and remain a proud proponent of resolution 76/262. New Zealand welcomed Security Council resolution 2728 (2024), which demanded an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan, leading to a lasting, sustainable ceasefire. We call on all parties to the conflict to comply with resolution 2728 (2024) without delay.

We acknowledge Israel's belated announcements that it will allow more humanitarian aid into Gaza. Israel must do everything in its power to enable safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access. Israel cannot now be under any misconceptions as to its legal obligations. The provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice are clear and must be complied with fully and immediately. New Zealand offers its full support for the mandate of Sigrid Kaag, Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza. Last week, we announced a financial contribution from New Zealand to support Ms. Kaag's mechanism to maximize aid flows into Gaza. New Zealand looks forward to the outcome of the investigations into the serious allegations that have been made against certain UNRWA staff, because

United Nations agencies, including UNRWA, have a critical role to play in meeting the needs of Palestinians. Israeli constraints on UNRWA's ability to operate in Gaza must be lifted.

New Zealand is gravely concerned by repeated indications from Israel that it may soon launch a military offensive into Rafah. Palestinian citizens must not be made to pay the price of defeating Hamas. The risks of the wider region being further drawn into the conflict also remain alarmingly high. We strongly urge regional actors, including Iran, to exercise the maximum restraint.

Israelis and Palestinians deserve to live in peace and security. There is overwhelming support in the international community, including from New Zealand, for a two-State solution. Achieving that will require serious negotiations by the parties and must involve a Palestinian State. We do not accept that Israel can achieve peace and security while taking more and more territory intended for a future Palestinian State. That misguided notion must end. Building and expanding illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and the forcible displacement of Palestinians from Gaza imperil the two-State solution, which remains the only blueprint for peace that we have.

Mr. Alwasil (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

At the outset we would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting under agenda item 63, "Use of the veto". Six months have passed since the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people began, and we find that the Security Council is either aborting draft resolutions that clearly call for a ceasefire or seeing the introduction of texts such as draft resolution S/2024/239, proposed by the United States, for which a vote was held on 22 March and which avoided making a clear demand for an immediate ceasefire. In addition to not seeking the desired objective of an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, it also lacked clear guarantees that would prevent further escalation of the situation. Furthermore, it ignored the responsibility of Israel, as the occupying Power, for the crimes and atrocities that have been perpetrated, giving a green light to the Israeli war machine to continue its massacres of unarmed civilians. The number of Palestinian deaths now exceeds 33,000, with 75,000 more injured, most of them women and children.

The Arab Group welcomed Security Council resolution 2728 (2024), adopted on 25 March. We are also grateful to Algeria, as well the other elected Council members, for their efforts in submitting draft resolution S/2024/173, which called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza during the holy month of Ramadan in a manner that would lead to a sustainable ceasefire. The Arab Group has continued to make that demand in the light of the catastrophic deterioration in the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the response to the international community's calls for a ceasefire. However, the lack of any implementation of resolution 2728 (2024) is putting the Council to the test and raising questions as to the point of its continued existence. The Arab Group demands that the resolution be fully implemented, because peace and security cannot be ignored or taken lightly. The Group reiterates that an immediate ceasefire will not delay, obstruct or, as some have said, run counter to any endeavours or diplomatic efforts on the ground to secure the release of prisoners and detainees from both sides. Using that as an excuse simply buys the Israeli occupation forces time to continue perpetrating their crimes and atrocities against unarmed civilians, along with their targeting of infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, residential areas and houses of worship, not to mention medical and humanitarian teams. Any attempt in any way to justify those crimes based on the right to self-defence is tantamount to legitimizing and participating in them. There can therefore be no justification for the inhumane crimes and atrocities that Israel, the occupying Power, is committing on a daily basis against unarmed civilians, justification that represents a double standard when compared to other contexts.

The Arab Group reiterates its calls to the international community and the Council to ensure the protection of civilians and to accelerate the unhindered supply of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, in accordance with resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023). The Arab Group also fully supports the efforts of Ms. Sigrid Kaag, United Nations Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, and her response to the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Strip.

While the Group of Arab States demands an immediate, unconditional and lasting ceasefire to bring a halt to the killing and maiming of victims, whose numbers are increasing daily, we also call on all countries sending weapons to Israel to end their exports in order to stop the bloodshed. We also demand

that the international community and the Council maintain respect for international law and international humanitarian law while holding Israel accountable for the horrible crimes that it continues to perpetrate.

We condemn the campaign that Israel is subjecting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to in an attempt to force the Agency to liquidate. We hope that the donor States that have suspended their UNRWA funding will reconsider their decision and resume their funding in order to close the gap in UNRWA's financing, as it is the backbone of humanitarian aid in Gaza and the region. The Arab Group condemns in the strongest possible terms the targeting by the Israeli occupation forces of a World Central Kitchen convoy in the Gaza Strip, a stark violation of international humanitarian law that resulted in the killing or injuring of several humanitarian and relief aid workers. The Arab Group holds Israel fully responsible for that dangerous act and calls for an urgent, independent and transparent investigation into the event so that those responsible can be punished. The Arab Group also stresses its rejection of the use of starvation as a weapon and the imposition of restrictions on humanitarian aid. We demand immediate protection for humanitarian and relief aid workers.

The issue of enabling the State of Palestine to join the United Nations as a full Member is now more urgent than ever. It would be a genuine and serious boost to the efforts to resolve the conflict in the region and bring an end to the occupation on the basis of a two-State solution. We look forward to receiving the necessary support in that regard. The Arab Group also commends the efforts of the ministerial committee of the joint Arab-Islamic Summit in Riyadh regarding Israel's aggression against the Palestinian people, with the aim of crystallizing an international movement to end the war on Gaza and exert pressure designed to launch a serious and genuine political process to achieve a lasting and comprehensive peace, in accordance with the recognized international terms of reference.

The Group of Arab States also commends the efforts of Qatar and Egypt to reach a humanitarian truce aimed at alleviating the tragic situation in the Gaza Strip, securing the release of prisoners and detainees on both sides and ensuring the entry of more humanitarian aid and relief convoys to Gaza. We hope that those efforts can lead to a de-escalation and stop the targeting of Palestinian civilians and their forced displacement so

as to bring the war on Gaza to a final halt, end the siege imposed on the Strip and relieve the suffering of the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, the Arab Group reiterates that peace is the strategic choice of the Middle East. The security of the region requires a speedy, just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative, a solution that can secure the Palestinian people's right to establish an independent State along the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We condemn all unilateral measures that undermine the possibility of a two-State solution and call for ceasing such measures immediately and fully.

Ms. Marín Sevilla (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations.

We are participating in this debate today as a result of the activation of the mechanism set out in resolution 76/262 following the negative vote cast by two permanent members of Security Council on draft resolution S/2024/239, submitted by the United States of America on 22 March 2024. In that regard, we would like to start by welcoming the transparency with which the delegations of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation explained both at the Security Council and at today's General Assembly meeting the motivations and rationale for their decisions to veto the draft resolution.

Contrary to what the mass media and its promoters have attempted to portray to the international community and world public opinion, draft resolution S/2024/239 was truly unbalanced and very biased. If it had been adopted, it would not have contributed to achieving the desperately needed and long-awaited ceasefire in Gaza, but instead would have de facto given a free hand to the occupying Power for its military operations in the Gaza Strip in order to continue the carnage against the Palestinian people, potentially setting a dangerous precedent for the future.

Despite the episode of 22 March 2024 in connection with the so-called ceasefire draft resolution, we applaud the decision of the Security Council to shoulder at least some of its responsibilities, as mandated by the Charter of the United Nations, and to finally adopt resolution 2728 (2024), of 25 March, which demands an immediate

ceasefire for the month of Ramadan to be respected by all parties.

In that regard, we call for the full respect and effective implementation of Security Council resolution 2728 (2024) with a view to achieving a lasting, sustainable and permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip that extends well beyond the holy month of Ramadan, which will conclude in few hours, thereby putting an end at last to the months of unbearable suffering and trauma endured by the Palestinian civilian population and the widespread destruction of all types of infrastructure, while also allowing for humanitarian actors on the ground, including United Nations specialized agencies led by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, to provide rapid and unhindered support and assistance to those in desperate need, in particular to alleviate the acute food insecurity crisis affecting the entire population and their horrific conditions of famine in northern Gaza.

Moreover, and even more important, we demand the strict, immediate and full implementation of all relevant resolutions adopted by the Security Council on the question of Palestine, including resolution 2728 (2024), which are legally binding under the provisions of Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations. Let us recall in that context that one of the motivations for the establishment of our Group of Friends three years ago was the concern we had about the increasing threats against the Charter of the United Nations, including selective approaches or accommodative interpretations of its provisions. We therefore categorically reject any attempt to continue dismissing Security Council resolutions on the question of Palestine, which ultimately only provides a framework of impunity for the occupying Power, while further prolonging the most painful conflict faced by humankind for more than 75 years. We cannot overemphasize that it is our joint collective responsibility to ensure that Security Council resolution 2728 (2024) does not remain mere words on paper, like the more than 90 resolutions of the Security Council has adopted on the same subject in the past.

Moreover, we would stress that strict and full compliance with the ceasefire and with the provisional measures handed down by the International Court of Justice on 26 January and 28 March remain crucial, including with respect to implementing the provisions of resolution ES-10/2022, which was adopted with an overwhelming majority by the General Assembly

exactly three months ago, during which time the vast majority of the international community has been patiently waiting for the organ entrusted with adopting such resolutions to ensure international peace and security — the Security Council — to take action once and for all, aware that it is the only thing that will ultimately stop the bloodshed, the forced displacements and Israel's declared plans for a ground military operation in Rafah, which, needless to say, would have disastrous implications for the almost 1.5 million people sheltering there. It will also allow for the protection of the Palestinian civilian population, in keeping with our collective obligations under international humanitarian law, thereby guaranteeing, among other things, the entrance of urgent aid to alleviate the catastrophic humanitarian conditions on the ground, including widespread hunger, disease and lack of shelter.

Turning to a different subject, although related to what I just said, we take this opportunity to reiterate our full support for the long-deferred need to address the question of membership of the State of Palestine at the United Nations, so that it can finally be admitted as a full Member of our Organization and can finally take its rightful place in the international community. We trust that the Security Council will finally shoulder its responsibility in that connection by positively considering the State of Palestine's membership application, which has been pending before that organ since September 2011 and was submitted for reconsideration on 2 April. We appeal to the Security Council, in the interest of truly preserving a political horizon for the Palestinian people, to submit a formal recommendation to the General Assembly. That would then make it possible to make their aspiration a reality, which is an important expression of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence.

To conclude, we would like to once again reiterate our firm commitment to the just cause of Palestine and our full solidarity with the heroic Palestinian people in their struggle to achieve their inalienable rights, freedom and justice, while also reaffirming our unwavering support for the preservation of a political horizon that would once and for all lead to the end of the illegal Israeli occupation and the achievement of the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem/Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, in accordance with the pre-1967 borders, all of which are key in order to establish a just and lasting peace and security in the region.

The President: I now give floor to the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer.

Mr. Lambrinidis (European Union): The European Union (EU) welcomes the convening of this debate following the vetoes cast on 27 March. We also welcome the efforts that led to the adoption of Security Council resolution 2728 (2024), of 25 March, which demands an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan, leading to a lasting, sustainable ceasefire and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages.

The European Union stresses that Security Council resolutions are binding and calls for their immediate implementation. The European Union stands ready to give its full support and will continue making every effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian suffering in Gaza. That includes a strong support to the United Nations and other humanitarian actors, and we urge cooperation and coordination with the United Nations to allow them to deliver on their important work.

The European Union stresses the importance of respecting and implementing the orders of the International Court of Justice, which are legally binding as well, and notes its provisional measures of 26 January and 28 March, which must be implemented immediately. All parties must respect international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The European Union is appalled by the unprecedented loss of civilian lives, the critical humanitarian situation in Gaza and the immediate risk of famine caused by the inadequate entry of aid. Ending the civilian suffering and preventing any further loss of life are absolute priorities. The safety of humanitarian workers is paramount. In that regard, we deplore the unprecedented numbers of such workers who have died in Gaza, including the staff members of the World Central Kitchen recently killed by Israel Defense Forces strikes. The European Union welcomes the Amalthea initiative, opening a maritime route for emergency assistance from Cyprus to Gaza to supplement the land routes that remain the main way to deliver the volume of supplies needed. Additional such land routes and crossings are urgently needed.

The European Union recalls its condemnation of Hamas in the strongest possible terms for its brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks on Israel on 7 October 2023, recognizing Israel's right to defend itself in line with international law and international humanitarian

law. The EU takes note of the reports by Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and is appalled by the sexual violence that occurred during the 7 October attacks. We support investigations into all allegations of sexual violence, noting the reports by Reem Alsalem, Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls. We urge the Israeli Government to refrain from undertaking a major operation in Rafah, where more than a million Palestinians are currently seeking safety and access to humanitarian assistance.

The European Union stresses that the services that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) provides in Gaza and across the region are essential. We welcome the swift launch by the United Nations of an internal investigation and external review following the serious allegations against 12 UNRWA staff, and the prospect of further decisive action by the United Nations to ensure accountability and strengthen control and oversight.

The European Union remains gravely concerned about the situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, where settlement expansion and settler violence have reached record levels. The EU condemns the Israeli Government's decisions to further expand illegal settlements across the occupied West Bank and urges it to reverse them. Settlements are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace. Israel must stop its settlement expansion and legalization, prevent settler violence and ensure that the perpetrators of crimes are held accountable. The European Union remains firmly committed to a lasting and sustainable peace based on a two-State solution. We call on all parties to refrain from actions that undermine the principle of a two-State solution and the viability of a future Palestinian State. The EU stands ready to contribute to reviving a political process.

In conclusion, in this highly tense regional situation, it is imperative to show the utmost restraint, especially in Lebanon and the Red Sea. The European Union has launched Operation Aspides to safeguard freedom of navigation and the security of seafarers in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the broader region. The principle of the inviolability of diplomatic and consular premises and personnel must be respected in all cases and all circumstances, in accordance with international law. Further escalation in the region is in no one's interests.

Mr. Rae (Canada) (*spoke in French*): I deliver this statement on behalf of Australia, New Zealand and my own country, Canada (CANZ).

The CANZ countries are grateful to you for convening this meeting, Mr. President. The veto initiative is an important mechanism for promoting the Security Council's transparency and accountability.

We commend the Security Council for its adoption on 25 March of resolution 2728 (2024), which demanded an immediate ceasefire in Gaza for the month of Ramadan and the release of the hostages. After six months of conflict, it was an essential step. We want to once again reiterate our unequivocal condemnation of the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October against Israel, and we deeply regret that the Security Council has still not condemned that horrific attack. The CANZ countries call on Hamas to immediately release all the hostages without conditions. Hamas should lay down its weapons and cease using the civilian population as a shield for its operations.

(*spoke in English*)

Despite the Council's adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), the much-needed immediate humanitarian ceasefire has not yet taken hold on the ground. We reiterate our urgent call for a humanitarian ceasefire as a critical step towards a permanent and sustainable ceasefire. The CANZ countries remain gravely concerned about the ever-worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza and its serious impact on Palestinian civilians. The Palestinians in northern Gaza are facing famine, indeed, for about half the population, imminent famine. The entire population of 2.23 million people is food-insecure, with a healthcare system that is already on the brink of collapse. The need for life-saving humanitarian assistance in Gaza has never been greater. International humanitarian law requires the parties to an armed conflict to allow and facilitate rapid, safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance to all civilians in need. The agreement on opening further border crossings to allow much-needed aid is a welcome development, but more must be done. We call on Israel to remove all the remaining obstacles to humanitarian assistance, open further crossing points and facilitate the safe and impartial delivery of aid.

Since 7 October, the CANZ countries have stressed that the protection of civilians is paramount and an obligation under international humanitarian law. We condemn the Israeli air strike that killed

seven employees of World Central Kitchen in Gaza, including Australian and Canadian citizens, and we extend our sincere condolences to their families and friends. That tragedy adds to the unacceptable number of humanitarian and healthcare workers who have been killed since the conflict began. The United Nations reports that at least 196 humanitarian workers have been killed since December 2023. Humanitarian workers must be respected and protected in accordance with international law. We expect a swift, thorough, genuine and transparent investigation by Israel and full accountability. We continue to underline our opposition to and our grave concerns about a potential ground offensive into Rafah, where more than 1 million Palestinians are now taking refuge.

The CANZ countries are deeply concerned about the continued Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank, including Israel's recent declaration of 800 hectares in the area as State lands. We reaffirm that settlements are illegal under international law and that settlements and settler violence are serious obstacles to a negotiated two-State solution. We call on Israel to halt all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. We must all continue to support the work of those who are leading the difficult negotiations between Israel and Hamas, and we commend the work of Egypt, Qatar and the United States in that regard. We support the Palestinian aspirations for self-determination and are firmly opposed to any forcible displacement of the Palestinian people from Gaza. There is no role for Hamas in the future governance of Gaza. CANZ countries remain steadfast in our commitment to a two-State solution, including the creation of a Palestinian State alongside Israel, where Palestinians and Israelis can live side by side in peace, security and dignity.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/262.

Qatar aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

The convening of today's meeting highlights once again the inability of the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility and undertake its role in the maintenance of international peace and security, specifically in the context of the worst humanitarian crisis in the world in the twenty-first century. That crisis is a consequence of the ongoing war waged by the Israeli occupation against our Palestinian brothers in the Gaza Strip

for the past six months. There are more than 33,000 victims, in addition to tens of thousands of wounded people and missing persons under the rubble, mostly women and children. Furthermore, approximately 2 million civilians have been forcibly displaced.

The State of Qatar strongly condemns the Israeli air raid targeting the humanitarian convoy of the World Central Kitchen in the Gaza Strip, which resulted in the killing of seven relief workers. That horrible incident proves once again the systematic targeting of humanitarian and relief workers in the Gaza Strip. The State of Qatar totally rejects the use of food as a weapon against civilians. Humanitarian assistance needs to be delivered to all parts of the Gaza Strip without any hindrance, in line with international humanitarian law. My country condemns in the strongest terms the ongoing Israeli threats related to a potential military operation in the city of Rafah. We categorically reject any military operation against that city and call on the Council to shoulder its responsibility and immediately halt that Israeli aggression.

We most emphatically condemn the measures of forced displacement targeting civilians that have been perpetrated by the occupying Power. We warn against their human and security consequences for the region. In that context, the State of Qatar condemns the systematic Israeli campaign against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which undertakes a vital and indispensable role in providing assistance to the brotherly Palestinian people. We call on donor States to continue their financial support to UNRWA in order to bridge the current financial gap. We commend the donor States that resumed their financial contributions to the Agency and call on the donor countries that suspended their financial contribution to the Agency to reconsider their decisions.

The State of Qatar once again welcomes Security Council resolution 2728 (2024), of 25 March. We take this opportunity to thank the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and other elected members of the Council for submitting and supporting that resolution, which calls for an immediate ceasefire during the month of Ramadan leading to a lasting and permanent ceasefire in Gaza. The State of Qatar calls on the Council to exert greater pressure to ensure the implementation of the resolution. We also emphasize that the Israeli occupation must implement the provisional measures of the International Court of Justice, including the opening

of border crossings, in order to avoid the starvation that threatens Gaza's population, not to mention the threat of genocide. We underscore that all efforts in response to the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza can only be fruitful with an immediate end of the Israeli aggression through a lasting and permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

The State of Qatar reiterates that we shall spare no effort to facilitate the ongoing negotiation process in order to reach a framework agreement that guarantees a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, in partnership with the Arab Republic of Egypt and the United States. The goal is to release the prisoners and hostages in order to guarantee the delivery of more humanitarian and relief assistance to the Gaza Strip, ensure the protection of civilians and end the bloodletting endured by our Palestinian brothers in the Gaza Strip. That will pave the way for launching a serious political process, resulting in a comprehensive and fair settlement of the Palestinian question, in line with the resolutions of international legitimacy.

In conclusion, the State of Qatar reiterates its steadfast and historic position in support of the brotherly Palestinian people and their just cause, in line with the resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative, which guarantee the establishment of an independent Palestinian state along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We call for support for the request of the State of Palestine to become a full sovereign Member of the United Nations. We also call on all Member States to support that worthy request.

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

Over the past six months, the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip has killed tens of thousands of civilians, most of whom are women and children. It has killed almost 196 humanitarian aid workers, including more than 175 United Nations staff, in blatant violation of international law and humanitarian values. The suffering and the crisis in Gaza are unprecedented at every level. Despite the repeated calls for a ceasefire, Israel has continued its indiscriminate and violent shelling, causing more killing and destruction. At its tenth emergency special session, the General Assembly recently adopted two important resolutions (resolutions ES-10/21 and ES-10/22) in response to the catastrophic humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip. The Security Council also adopted three resolutions, the most recent

of which was resolution 2728 (2024), of 25 March, calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip during the holy month of Ramadan in a manner that would lead to a lasting and sustainable ceasefire.

The Kingdom of Morocco stresses the importance of the immediate and full implementation of resolution 2728 (2024) by all parties and in a manner that would allow for addressing the crisis with all its dimensions and ensure respect for international law and international humanitarian law. The Kingdom of Morocco once again calls for an immediate and lasting ceasefire. We stress the need to protect civilians and humanitarian aid workers so that they can perform their noble tasks in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law. We call for the delivery of unimpeded and adequate humanitarian assistance to the population of Gaza, the release of prisoners and detainees and the creation of a political horizon for the Palestinian question.

The Kingdom of Morocco reiterates its rejection and condemnation of all violations and policies of collective punishment and forced displacement, as well as attempts to impose a new *fait accompli*. We reiterate that the Gaza Strip is an inseparable part of the Palestinian territories and a unified Palestinian State. We stress that threats to expand the military operation so that it would cover all areas of Gaza, including Rafah, are unacceptable because that could exacerbate the already deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. Morocco also stresses the need to allow our brother Palestinians in the Gaza Strip to access the humanitarian aid that they should be receiving safely, adequately and sustainably, with no impediments. To that end, based on our commitment and the ongoing focus of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee, on the Palestinian question, and based on his instructions, we have launched a major humanitarian operation during the holy month of Ramadan to help Palestinians in Gaza and the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. The assistance that King Mohammed has ordered consists of more than 40 tons of food items, including basic items. Morocco is the first country since the military operations started more than five months ago to send humanitarian aid by land in an unprecedented way, delivering it directly to the people in need. Moreover, the Bayt Mal Al-Quds Al-Sharif agency has provided 2,000 food baskets to families in Jerusalem and continues to provide 1,000 meals daily to Palestinians in the Holy City, as well as establishing an emergency control room at the Al-Quds Hospital.

In conclusion, and in the light of the dangerous developments in the Palestinian territory threatening international and regional security, we must make greater efforts to revive the Middle East peace process with a view to reaching a just and comprehensive settlement that can guarantee all of the Palestinian people's legitimate rights, foremost among them their right to establish an independent Palestinian State along the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. In that context, like the rest of the Arab and Islamic States and the members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, Morocco reiterates its support for granting the State of Palestine full membership in the United Nations.

Ms. Oehri (Liechtenstein): We thank you for convening today's meeting, Mr. President, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 76/262, regarding the double veto cast in the Security Council on its draft resolution S/2024/239, on the situation in Gaza, which the United States presented on 22 March. Every veto in the Council falls within the scope of resolution 76/262 and is accordingly subject to discussion by the United Nations membership as a whole. We thank the Security Council for producing a special report (A/78/832) in a timely and efficient manner and note that both the Member States that exercised the relevant vetoes are participating in today's meeting, demonstrating once again the importance of this initiative. As with previous meetings under this agenda item, we ask you to issue a summary of today's debate, Mr. President.

We note that the vetoed draft resolution discussed today enjoyed majority support in the Council. In that respect, we are concerned not only about the veto itself but about some of the comments accompanying its use. We believe firmly that any draft text must be evaluated on its merits, not based on who its penholder may be. Any obstructive dynamic between the permanent members has worrisome ramifications for the Council's ability to fulfil its mandate and should be avoided.

At the same time, Liechtenstein is pleased that between the meeting where the vetoes we are discussing took place (see S/PV.9584) and today's meeting, the Security Council has been able to adopt a product addressing the ongoing protection-of-civilians crisis in Gaza by demanding an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan (resolution 2728 (2024)). We particularly want to congratulate the 10 elected Council members on their crucial role, leading to the resolution's successful adoption with even broader support.

However, the resolution's lack of implementation continues to be of great concern, and we would like to remind all Member States, including Council members, that such resolutions are legally binding under Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations. Since Ramadan ends this week, and considering the attacks we have seen recently, including on humanitarian personnel, further action by the Security Council to protect civilians is urgently needed.

Finally, Liechtenstein would like to reiterate its position on the situation as a whole, as we have expressed in previous meetings. The conflict in Gaza is fundamentally a crisis of the protection of civilians. The imperatives outlined in previous resolutions adopted by the General Assembly are mutually reinforcing. An immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian ceasefire is the most important step towards ensuring full, immediate, safe, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access, as well as enabling the release of all hostages. We therefore reiterate our call for the full and effective implementation of those resolutions.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of Egypt aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Saudi Arabia as Chair of the Group of Arab States.

We thank you for convening today's meeting, Mr. President. We are meeting today six months into Israel's bloody war against the defenceless Palestinian people. Israel has deliberately killed more than 32,000 martyrs, and more than 75,000 people are injured, mostly women and children. More than 1.5 million Palestinians are now displaced, and more than 200 humanitarian workers have been killed, including, recently, personnel from the World Central Kitchen. According to United Nations reports, the Gaza Strip is on the brink of famine. The regional repercussions of the crisis are intense, despite the Security Council's adoption of three resolutions on the matter, together with two resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth emergency special session. The Human Rights Council has adopted resolution 55/28, demanding an end to arms exports to Israel. The International Court of Justice has also issued two orders on the subject, but the end result has been zero, nil.

Israel has ignored all of those resolutions adopted by United Nations bodies. Not only has it refused to comply with any of them, but it is now fighting the United Nations itself. It has so far killed more than 179 United Nations staff members and has waged a

campaign of groundless accusations against United Nations personnel and agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), whose role in the Palestinian territory is indispensable and irreplaceable.

In the light of that dire situation, Israel is now effectively a State above international law and international legitimacy, a State above the binding resolutions of the United Nations. There are two reasons for that. First, the Security Council has failed to adopt a resolution under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations compelling Israel to respect an immediate, clear and unambiguous ceasefire and calling for the immediate opening of all border crossings to ensure the unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance and to save the people of Gaza from the famine that Israel is using as a weapon of war. All Council resolutions on the Palestinian question, including resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024), are binding. Shame on all of us if we continue to fail. We need to implement a Council resolution imposing a ceasefire.

The second reason is clear — it is Israel's long and unfortunate history of impunity and lack of accountability, thanks to the extraordinary international immunity that certain States have granted Israel for decades. As a result, Israel has committed documented crimes against humanity against the Palestinian people in order to expel them from their land and annihilate their just cause. Egypt stresses how important it is to compel Israel, as the occupying Power, to implement the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly and adhere to the rulings of the International Court of Justice, with the aim of reaching an immediate and lasting ceasefire. Israel must be prevented from launching any military operation in Rafah and should open all border crossings for the unconditional delivery of humanitarian assistance. Any attempts to displace the Palestinian people or prevent them from returning to their homes and lands should be blocked.

We want a clear resolution on this subject without any language, conditions, legal or drafting structures that could be misinterpreted. Enough is enough, as the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza has shown. We also call for the implementation of Human Rights Council resolution 55/28 to prevent the export of arms to the Israeli killing machine, as that alone can stop the current massacre. And we call for an international investigation, under the auspices of the United Nations,

into all the crimes that Israel has committed since the start of the war on Gaza. As the occupying Power, Israel must be held accountable for those crimes and must bear the cost of reconstruction and compensation. Furthermore, we urge all countries that have suspended funding to UNRWA to resume their contributions without the political conditions that are aimed solely at appeasing Israel.

Mr. Valtýsson (Iceland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In cooperation with Qatar and the United States, Egypt is currently working diligently to achieve a ceasefire, ensure the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian detainees and prisoners and guarantee the delivery of humanitarian assistance at scale. Alongside our Arab brethren, we will continue striving to reach a just and lasting peace in the region. That peace can be achieved only with the establishment of an independent Palestinian State along the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The time has come for Palestine, which possesses all the elements of a State as defined by international law, to be recognized by all States and obtain full membership in the United Nations. Egypt hopes that the Security Council and the General Assembly will assume their responsibilities and meet the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people.

Peace and coexistence are the only way to achieve a stable future for the region and for Arabs and Israelis alike. Only peace and coexistence can bring security to the region and the security that Israel desires. War, starvation, genocide, settlements and occupation will bring nothing but destruction.

Ms. Chan Valverde (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): As of today, 185 days have passed since the crisis in Gaza began, and in that time we have witnessed five uses of the veto in the Security Council. Following the fifth use of the veto (see S/PV.9584), and thanks to the work of its 10 elected members, the Council adopted resolution 2728 (2024), calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip during Ramadan. An immediate ceasefire is a fundamental requirement if we are to save lives, expand humanitarian access and prevent wider conflicts. The ceasefire was called for by the General Assembly at its emergency special session a few months ago (see A/ES-10/PV.45) and by the Secretary-General in a letter to the Security Council invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations (S/2023/962). However, Ramadan is coming to an end this week, and the Council's binding resolution has not

become a reality on the ground, which is detrimental to the credibility and legitimacy of the Security Council, this Organization and multilateralism itself. In that regard, Costa Rica would like to make some urgent appeals.

First, Costa Rica calls on all the parties to respect the rules and principles of international law, in particular international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols Additional on the conduct of hostilities and the protection of civilians and civilian objects. Even in conflict situations there are rules, the most sacred of which are about respecting and protecting the life and safety of civilians. The principles of proportionality, limitation, distinction, precaution and humanity must prevail. We want to emphasize the adoptions of resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024) as important steps in addressing the crisis. Costa Rica calls for their implementation, including of the provisions that demand the scaling-up of aid, support for the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers, a clear warning against the forced displacement of civilians, and above all an immediate, unconditional and lasting ceasefire.

Secondly, Costa Rica calls for immediate, full, safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza and other places where there are victims. We also call for unhindered protection for humanitarian workers, health workers and journalists. It is vital to open the port of Ashdod, a direct land route from Jordan and all of the border crossings, especially at this critical time of acute food insecurity and an imminent risk of famine. Facilitating the entry of humanitarian aid is not a privilege but an obligation. Costa Rica calls for compliance with the multiple orders of the International Court of Justice regarding humanitarian relief in Gaza. We must avoid the revictimization of the civilian population, who are experiencing this tragedy on a daily basis, and alleviate their suffering at all costs.

Thirdly, we are concerned about reports of the use of artificial intelligence as a tool for targeted attacks, especially in densely populated residential areas, which results in high numbers of civilian casualties. No part of life-or-death decisions should be delegated to algorithms. The existing legal obligations are designed to ensure the proportionality of attacks and preserve the distinction between combatants and civilians. For Costa Rica, a robust international response is urgently needed not only to mitigate the devastating consequences of

the use of artificial intelligence for civilians, but also to protect them. Those norms must be expanded, not just maintained.

Fourthly, we call on all States to ensure that the political paralysis in the Security Council does not undermine its legitimacy or that of the system as a whole. The General Assembly should and must rise to this situation and take on a monitoring and safeguarding role.

Costa Rica reiterates its unwavering commitment to the security of Israel and its solidarity with the Israeli people following the unjustifiable terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October, including the taking of hostages, whose holding constitutes a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. We have repeatedly condemned that attack on innocent civilians. However, Israel's war on Hamas cannot take place outside the principles of *jus in bello*. We support the efforts that Egypt, Qatar and the United States are making to negotiate an agreement to secure the release of the hostages. We will continue to reiterate our call on Hamas for an immediate, safe and unconditional release of all hostages.

Costa Rica will continue its efforts to reach a political solution whereby Israel and Palestine, as two democratic States, are able to live side by side in peace within safe and recognized borders, in line with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the internationally agreed parameters.

Mrs. Narváez Ojeda (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of today's formal meeting of the General Assembly to discuss the veto cast in the Security Council on Friday, 22 March in relation to draft resolution S/2024/239, authored by the United States on the situation in the Gaza Strip, a matter of great urgency and sensitivity for our Organization. We also take note of the special report issued by the Security Council on the matter (see A/78/832). We appreciate the fact that the discussions and negotiations on the draft resolution did in some way contribute to the adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), introduced by the 10 elected members of the Security Council. We have closely followed the negotiations in the Security Council on the matter and underscore the willingness of its members to reach agreement.

A ceasefire in the Gaza Strip is an essential factor in protecting civilians and by extension in ensuring full, immediate, safe, unhindered and sustained

humanitarian access, including respect for resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023), which the Security Council itself adopted last year. We point out that they require facilitating the use of all available routes to enter the entire Gaza Strip. A permanent ceasefire in the Strip remains a priority for the protection of civilians, in particular women, the elderly and children. Human life must unquestionably be the top priority and the Security Council must be able to monitor the situation. There can be no doubt that both the terrorist acts perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October and the State of Israel's indiscriminate response against the civilian population of the Gaza Strip, which has also affected the people in the West Bank, are violations of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and international humanitarian law.

We stress our position on the use of the veto and the risk that it could undermine the credibility of the multilateral system. We insist that its use should be restricted in circumstances such as mass atrocities and war crimes. For that reason, we urge continued discussion to enable the General Assembly to adopt the Franco-Mexican initiative, which already has 106 signatory States, and the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group's code of conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, which has 130 signatories. We call on Members that have not yet done so to sign up to both initiatives. Once again, we underscore the importance of reforming the Security Council and its working methods, so that decisions on the maintenance of international peace and security can be taken in a timely manner and better reflect current geopolitical realities such as the situation in the Gaza Strip. That will be crucial to strengthening the capacity of the Organization as a whole.

We want to emphasize that Chile promotes a two-State solution and the right of Israel and Palestine to live in harmony, within safe and internationally recognized borders and with full respect for the human rights of all their inhabitants. Chile reaffirms its support for the State of Palestine's full membership in the Organization. In that regard, we call urgently for the full and prompt implementation of the relevant resolutions in support of the right of the Palestinian people to establish a sovereign State. It is also essential to ensure compliance with Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which reaffirms that Israel's settlement-building in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, must be halted. The settlements have

no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of international law.

Lastly, we encourage all the parties involved, as well as the international community, to continue working to end this terrible war. That will be possible only through diplomacy and dialogue. We underscore that the Security Council already has a draft resolution, submitted by France, aimed at continuing to negotiate and advance a solution to the conflict. We recognize the efforts and results that friendly countries have achieved to mitigate this crisis.

Once again, we reiterate that because we view the clarification of facts and responsibilities in this issue as essential, and in order to prevent the situation from happening again, Chile, together with Mexico, sent a brief to the International Criminal Court about the situation in Palestine. It seeks to strengthen the Prosecutor's investigation into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity that occurred in Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Israel and that are illegal under the Rome Statute.

Mrs. Chanda (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): In a disastrous humanitarian context, with imminent famine and more than 100 people still being held hostage, nothing is more urgent than an immediate ceasefire in the Middle East. In the light of reports of serious violations of international humanitarian law and the provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice, the Security Council should act to ensure the protection of civilians and civilian objects.

The draft resolution submitted to the Council on 22 March by the United States (S/2024/239) was not adopted because of the veto of two of the Council's permanent members. Our vote in favour of the draft resolution was based on the need to preserve the Council's capacity to take action to establish an immediate ceasefire, address the humanitarian situation in Gaza, call for the release of the hostages and enable the rapid, safe and unhindered delivery of assistance to civilians in need. We also supported the strong condemnation of Hamas's acts of terror in the American draft resolution.

The Council's ability to act depends on the ability of its members to agree on a common goal and negotiate in good faith to achieve it. That is why, following the veto of 22 March, we pursued the same objectives in negotiating the draft resolution sponsored by the elected members of the Security Council, adopted on

25 March as resolution 2728 (2024). For the first time since 7 October, the Council demanded an immediate ceasefire. We note that despite its clear wording and legally binding nature, the requirement is not being met by the parties to the conflict. Switzerland is alarmed by the humanitarian consequences of the ongoing hostilities. A broad military offensive in Rafah would make the conditions that the civilian population in Gaza is enduring even more catastrophic than they are now, and that is an unacceptable prospect. Resolution 2728 (2024) and the two humanitarian resolutions (resolution 2712 (2023) and resolution 2720 (2023)) adopted by the Security Council in 2023 must be implemented immediately and unequivocally.

More than 200 humanitarian workers have lost their lives in Gaza during the past six months. Humanitarian personnel are protected by international humanitarian law and must never be targeted. Attacks on humanitarian personnel, such as that on the World Central Kitchen convoy, are unacceptable and must stop. Humanitarian organizations simply cannot do their job and provide vital aid to civilians in need in the absence of security guarantees and safe and unhindered access to the entire population affected. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is the largest humanitarian actor in the Gaza Strip and must be allowed unhindered access to the civilian population in need. We once again call on the parties to ensure strict respect for international humanitarian law. We want to remind the Assembly that attacks on civilian populations, including humanitarian and medical personnel, and the deliberate use of starvation as a method of warfare are war crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

In accordance with the mandate given us by the Assembly, which elected Switzerland to the Security Council, we are committed to ensuring that the Council can unite in its action to implement its resolutions and end the conflict in the Middle East, in accordance with international law and based on a two-State solution.

Mr. Kuymizakis (Malta): Malta regrets that we are meeting today in the light of the vetoes cast in the Security Council on 22 March (see S/PV.9584). We emphasize that each use of the veto undermines the ability of the Council to uphold and safeguard the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Malta voted in favour of the draft resolution submitted to the Council by the United States (S/2024/239). Its adoption would have been a step in the right direction, building

on resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023), which contain strong language on scaling up humanitarian aid to the people affected by the conflict in the Gaza Strip and on protecting and respecting humanitarian assets and medical facilities.

We regret that the vetoes prevented the Security Council from clearly condemning the Hamas terror attacks of 7 October 2023 through the draft resolution. Malta reiterates its strong condemnation of that heinous attack and calls on Hamas to immediately and unconditionally release all hostages. We remain firm in our position that an immediate and permanent ceasefire is the only way that we can prevent any further deterioration of the situation and begin addressing the catastrophic impact of the war, which has led to the deaths of more than 32,000 Palestinians and 1,200 Israelis. That is why Malta, together with the other nine elected members of the Security Council, collectively drafted resolution 2728 (2024), which the Council adopted on 25 March. The resolution clearly demands an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan, leading to a lasting, sustainable ceasefire. As we are now reaching the end of Ramadan, Malta regrets that the resolution was not implemented by all sides and that the desperately needed ceasefire did not materialize.

Malta continues to be alarmed by the scale of the human suffering that is unfolding in Gaza, despite the adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), which, along with resolutions 2720 (2023) and 2712 (2023), should be respected and implemented by all parties. We also call for the immediate and full implementation of the order on provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice on 26 January. Furthermore, international humanitarian law must be respected by all parties. Military actions during hostilities must always be carried out in line with the principles of distinction, proportionality and necessity, and the parties are obliged to ensure that civilians and civilian infrastructure are protected. Unhindered humanitarian aid and the safety of United Nations and humanitarian workers must be guaranteed. In that regard, Malta reiterates its deep shock at the Israel Defense Forces' recent killing of seven World Central Kitchen humanitarian personnel operating in Gaza. That utterly unacceptable event brings the total number of humanitarians killed since the conflict began to more than 220. It is appalling, and we express our deepest condolences to the loved ones of all who have been lost.

In conclusion, Malta underlines its steadfast commitment to the realization of a two-State solution along the pre-1967 borders, addressing the legitimate aspirations of both sides, with Jerusalem as the future capital of two States, living side by side in peace and security, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions and internationally agreed parameters.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): On 22 March, after consulting all Security Council members and accommodating significant edits, the United States put forward a draft resolution (S/2024/239) in the Council in good faith. The vast majority of the Council voted in favour of it. Unfortunately, Russia and China decided to exercise their veto. Russia and China offered many over-the-top explanations for their obstruction. Rather than support diplomacy in order to release the hostages and secure a ceasefire, they attacked the United States. We just heard more of the same today.

But here is the truth. While Russia and China attack and distract, the United States is at the table, working for an immediate ceasefire and the release of all hostages. We have rolled up our sleeves and remain engaged in on-the-ground diplomacy. And as the humanitarian crisis in Gaza worsens, we are doing everything possible to surge the delivery of aid and push for humanitarian access, including by opening additional land routes and protecting humanitarian workers. For their part, Russia and China are engaged in no meaningful diplomacy and are offering only lectures, something they are in no position to do. Worse, they continue to shield Hamas, the party that set the horrific crisis in motion. Let us be clear. In vetoing the draft resolution, Russia and China stopped the Council from condemning Hamas for burning people alive, gunning down civilians at a concert, raping women and girls and taking hundreds of people hostage, including children. That is outrageous and beneath the Council's dignity.

Russia and China also made use of the veto because they did not want to vote for a draft resolution penned by the United States. Even after inclusive consultations over weeks and weeks, they claim that we do not want a ceasefire. That is not true. We made that clear, just days after Russia and China vetoed our draft, which called for an extended ceasefire, when the Council adopted resolution 2728 (2024), calling for a shorter ceasefire. As President Biden emphasized on a call with Prime Minister Netanyahu just last week, "An immediate ceasefire is essential to stabilize and improve the humanitarian situation and protect innocent civilians".

There can be no doubt that the United States supports a ceasefire. And we know that the way to achieve that is through negotiations on an agreement whereby the hostages are released. Such negotiations are ongoing with the help of Egypt and Qatar.

There are other critical items that the United States' draft resolution set out to achieve. The Assembly will not hear about them from Russia or China, so let me detail some of them here. The draft resolution that they vetoed strengthened the mandate of Sigrid Kaag, the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, and bolstered her efforts to secure the opening of additional ports and crossings for aid, because when famine is on the horizon, we need to do everything possible to support the United Nations. The draft resolution called for immediate, concrete measures to fix the deconfliction processes, because this conflict has been one of the worst in recent history in terms of the numbers of aid workers who have been killed. The draft resolution underscored support for the Palestinian Authority to govern not only the West Bank but also Gaza, and I am pleased to say that we are seeing progress towards that goal with the Palestinian Authority's announcement last week of a new Cabinet. The draft resolution also emphasized that there must be no change in the territory of Gaza and denounced the incitement to violence and violent extremist rhetoric that are barriers to the efforts to advance a two-State solution.

In justifying its veto, Russia labelled those provisions "political measures". We believe that they are essential building blocks for a more peaceful future. We have a responsibility to begin laying a foundation for that future now. The United States rejects Russia and China's decision to play petty politics. We will continue our efforts to advance peace in the region. We will remain at the negotiating table to enable the release of the hostages and a ceasefire. We will continue to provide massive support to the humanitarian effort at a time when starvation has set in and millions of people are in dire need of assistance. We will continue to press Israel to take specific, concrete and measurable steps to address civilian harm, humanitarian suffering and the safety of aid workers. We will continue to press for the implementation of all Council resolutions. We will do all of that because that is what it will take to end this conflict and address the dire humanitarian situation. Undermining those efforts, as Russia and China's veto attempted to do, serves only to prolong the situation.

Mr. Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to thank the President for convening today's meeting.

Despite the international demands and the Security Council's adoption of its resolution 2728 (2024), all calling for a ceasefire, the devastating situation in Gaza has continued and the security and humanitarian conditions in the region have deteriorated, as the Israeli regime has blatantly disregarded the resolution and continued its relentless bombing and genocidal aggression against the innocent people of Gaza. Every day the entire world wakes up to a new catastrophic tragedy, to news of suffering civilians, deliberate attacks on humanitarian workers and new, barbaric crimes perpetrated by the Israeli regime. That assault is without precedent in modern history in the scale and pace with which it is killing children, United Nations personnel, humanitarian and medical teams and journalists, as well as its cross-border attacks on diplomatic premises.

The whole world is calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. Across the globe, 153 States have voted for a ceasefire. The Secretary-General and the United Nations have called for a ceasefire. The International Court of Justice has ordered it and a Security Council resolution has demanded it. We all know that the horrors need to end, and the only way to end them is with an effective ceasefire. Despite repeated calls, Israel has failed to commit to its obligations. It has blatantly defied the Security Council's resolutions and continued its atrocious and genocidal acts against the defenceless people of Gaza.

We have frequently been warned of the risk of the military operations spreading beyond Gaza, including to neighbouring countries. On 1 April the Israeli regime perpetrated another heinous crime by targeting Iran's diplomatic premises in Damascus. The attacks resulted in the martyrdom of seven Iranian military staffers in our Embassy and several Syrian civilians and are a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. That is a profound insult to one of the shared principles of the international community, the inviolability of representatives and diplomatic and consular premises. It is crystal clear that Israel's ongoing destabilizing and irresponsible actions and atrocities against nations in our region are a real threat to regional and international peace and security. The impunity that Israel enjoys is a challenge to the legitimacy of international law, and

we regret that the Security Council has not been able to condemn this terrorist attack.

The savage and genocidal acts in Gaza, as well as the frequent violations of international law, could not have happened without the explicit consent and comprehensive political, financial and military support and partnership of the United States. Within the Security Council, the United States has been playing hypocritical games of pressure and blackmail by frequently exercising its veto on various draft resolutions, thereby preventing the adoption of resolutions calling for a ceasefire or an urgent suspension of hostilities. Washington's real goal in proposing draft resolution S/2024/239, vetoed by the Russian Federation on 22 March, was not to develop a compromise text but to give the Israeli leadership a free hand to take any action it wants, including the most inhumane measures aimed at the further ethnic cleansing of Gaza. In fact, by setting preconditions for a ceasefire and including unacceptable political elements, the United States' draft resolution was intended to give Israel a green light to mount a military operation in Rafah. Its hypocrisy was that it was proposed in the guise of a ceasefire.

In playing its destructive role, the United States has gone through an entire arsenal of political and diplomatic devices in order to prevent peace from being established and has deliberately undermined the multilateral efforts undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations for the sake of its selfish geopolitical interests in the Middle East. It is regrettable that even following the adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), the United States representatives decided to squander all credit and defend the Israeli regime's crimes by calling the resolution non-binding. It is proof that what is needed is for the Security Council to adopt such a resolution under Chapter VII of the Charter, so that if it is not implemented the regime will be subject to punishment under international law. However, in spite of the current circumstances and the regime's failure to adhere to the international community's demands, the Security Council and the whole international community should be taking practical steps to ensure that the Israeli war machine cannot enjoy impunity to continue its assault on Palestinian civilians.

We firmly believe that without a sustainable ceasefire, the tragedy will worsen, leading to the loss of more innocent lives, including children and women. Furthermore, Israel should be punished for all of its wrongdoing internationally, which has set the whole

region on fire. Within the past six months the ongoing Israeli aggression in Gaza has resulted in the tragic death of more than 34,000 Palestinians. Those are not mere statistics. They represent lives, dreams and hopes that have been destroyed. The perpetrators must be held accountable. The fate of the Palestinians and peace in the region must be determined not by Israel alone but by our collective efforts.

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): The situation in Gaza, which has lasted for the past six months, has created enormous, unspeakable suffering. The killing of seven humanitarian workers from the World Central Kitchen last week exemplifies the tragedy and danger that all the people in Gaza are facing. No one is safe. This catastrophe must end.

The main objective of the draft resolution proposed by the United States (S/2024/239), which two permanent members of the Security Council vetoed last month, was to support the intense diplomatic efforts of key stakeholders, including Egypt, Qatar and the United States, aimed at securing a ceasefire and the release of all the remaining hostages. Eleven members of the Security Council, including the Republic of Korea, voted in favour of the United States draft in consideration of its merits. It included some positive elements that could have had real impact on the ground, including the imperative of an immediate and sustained ceasefire, unequivocal support for the ongoing diplomatic efforts to secure such a ceasefire in connection with the release of hostages, as well as tackling the concerns about a possible ground offensive into Rafah. Those elements resulted from intensive discussions among Council members, and the Republic of Korea therefore regrets that the draft resolution was not adopted. As a sponsor of the General Assembly's landmark resolution 76/262, on the use of veto, the Republic of Korea urges the Council's permanent members to pay greater attention to the voice of the majority of its members and the wider United Nations membership.

In spite of the regrettable failure to adopt the United States' draft resolution, the Council members did not give up on achieving a meaningful outcome aimed at making a tangible impact on the ground. It was therefore encouraging that through the united efforts of the 10 elected members of the Council, including my own country, we finally saw the adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), demanding an immediate ceasefire leading to one that would be lasting and sustainable, as well as the release of all the remaining hostages. However, despite

that resolution's vital adoption, the bloody hostilities in Gaza have continued, further exacerbating the grim humanitarian crisis as the final days of Ramadan slip away. As my delegation has repeatedly emphasized, the demands in resolution 2728 (2024) should be fully implemented without delay. An immediate ceasefire should be in place, all the remaining hostages taken by Hamas and other such groups should be immediately and unconditionally released and all barriers to the provision of humanitarian assistance lifted.

In that regard, we sincerely hope that the recently reported withdrawal of ground troops from Khan Younis will have a positive impact on the ongoing diplomatic efforts to achieve a ceasefire and the release of the hostages. We believe that will lead to further negotiations to lay the groundwork for sustainable peace in Israel and Palestine, based on a concrete path towards the realization of a two-State solution. As a member of the Security Council, the Republic of Korea will maintain its active engagement in every effort to achieve the aspirations of the international community.

Mr. Gaouiaoui (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): For more than six months we have been seeing bombing, killing and horrific images after millions of people around the world have demanded a ceasefire in Gaza that would put a stop to those scenes of destruction and death. The images threaten what remains of our humanity. We demand a ceasefire that can bring an end to the huge human price exacted by the Israeli machine of destruction, which has resulted in the deaths of more than 33,000 martyrs and in injury to another 75,000 people. We demand a ceasefire that can alleviate the daily suffering in the Gaza Strip, guarantee the delivery of humanitarian aid at scale to those who need it and allow Palestinians to overcome their pain and achieve their aspirations.

After the whole world called on the United Nations, including in the General Assembly itself, to address the situation, the Security Council finally woke up when its elected members submitted a draft resolution that genuinely reflected the demands of the international community and called for an immediate ceasefire. The Council adopted resolution 2728 (2024) following the exceptional collective efforts of its elected members. However, the occupying Power has maintained its disregard for the resolutions of international legitimacy and has continued to challenge us all with its refusal to implement resolution 2728 (2024). That is a clear and blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations,

especially its Article 25, which makes it clear that Member States are bound to implement the Council's resolutions. It is an unambiguous response to those who thought that the occupying Power would choose to abide by its international legal obligations. We have to abandon those delusions and work together to impose a ceasefire.

The behaviour of the occupying Power and its continued refusal to implement resolutions of international legitimacy are testing our multilateral system. They are a challenge to our ability to guarantee the effectiveness of the world order and its future in the light of the accusations that our Organization, frankly, is suffering from double standards and selectivity in the implementation of international law. We must end the impunity and the lack of accountability that put the Israeli occupier above the law. They send the dangerous message that our world will submit to a logic of force and that it will not apply the same rules and laws to everyone. The Israeli occupation has continued its monstrous behaviour and the international community has been unable to stop it. That threatens the collapse of multilateralism based on the rule of law. We must deter the occupation forces and stop the killing machine that they have let loose against the Palestinians. We must all work together to prevent the worst from happening, especially a possible invasion of Rafah.

Occupation is the disease affecting our region, and the Middle East will not achieve peace as long as the Palestinians are deprived of their legitimate rights. Any piecemeal solutions that do not deal with the root causes of the conflict are simply palliative measures that will never appease the Palestinians' anger, which could once again spark into a fire threatening the region and the world.

We therefore want to echo the words of President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of Algeria when he said that the Palestinian people need to be able to enjoy their inalienable legitimate rights, including their right to self-determination, to establish an independent Palestinian State and to enable refugees to return home. The international community supports all of those rights, and we must work diligently to make them a reality. The first step to that end is to grant Palestine full membership in the United Nations. There is no justification for not allowing Palestine to become a full sovereign Member of the Organization. The Security Council, which will be considering Palestine's request for membership this month, must respond to the

overwhelming wish of Member States and recommend that Palestine's application be accepted. Algeria will spare no effort to that end.

Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault (France) (*spoke in French*): France regrets Russia and China's exercise of their right to veto the draft resolution submitted by the United States on 22 March (S/2024/239). The situation in Gaza requires that the Security Council be able to clearly state its demands on every aspect of the crisis, humanitarian, security and political. It is unacceptable that neither the Council nor the General Assembly have so far been able to condemn the terrorist actions and acts of sexual violence committed by Hamas and other terrorist groups on 7 October 2023.

While we stand by our commitment to the security of Israel, nothing can release it from its obligation to respect international law, including international humanitarian law, which applies to all actors. The protection of civilians and humanitarian workers must be guaranteed. All hostages must be released immediately and unconditionally, and we support the ongoing efforts to that end. There must also be an immediate and lasting ceasefire. Two million people are in dire need in Gaza. There is an urgent need to bring in aid on a massive scale and guarantee full, safe and unimpeded access for that aid, in accordance with international humanitarian law and based on the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. The role of the United Nations as coordinator is vital. Israel's announcement a few days ago about the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip must be implemented, including by opening the Erez crossing. France will continue its efforts with Jordan and Egypt to provide a humanitarian response to the enormous needs of the civilian population of Gaza.

Lastly, it is high time to lay the foundations for a political settlement that will decisively and irreversibly implement a two-State solution, the only solution that can guarantee peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians. The draft resolution that we have submitted to the Council corresponds to that perspective. Our efforts are consistent with the work of the Arab contact group, which we support, and we will continue to work within the Security Council to engage with the parties, as well as all regional and international partners, to that end.

Mr. Rizal (Malaysia): My delegation thanks the President for convening today's plenary meeting following the vetoes cast by two permanent members of the Security Council during its meeting on 22 March

under the agenda item “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (see S/PV.9584).

Malaysia notes the exercise of the veto on the draft resolution (S/2024/239) presented by the United States. However, we were pleased to see that the Council was finally able to agree on an unequivocal call for a humanitarian ceasefire with its adoption of resolution 2728 (2024) some days later. The resolution, spearheaded by the elected members of the Council, responds to the clarion call that we have been hearing from the international community, the Secretary-General and United Nations entities for the past six months, since the conflict in Gaza first erupted.

Regrettably, and as we have seen with previous Security Council resolutions, Israel continues to defy the demands in resolution 2728 (2024) by persisting with its aggression in Gaza. It has continued to indiscriminately kill Palestinian civilians, women and children alike. It has continued to restrict and deprive the population of life-saving humanitarian assistance to a point where innocent civilians are being starved to death. It continues to deliberately destroy medical facilities and civilian infrastructure. It has killed at least 196 humanitarian personnel to date, as the Secretary-General announced last Friday. It is doing everything it can to ensure the widespread and complete destruction of Gaza, making nowhere in that tiny strip of land safe. Israel continues to brazenly violate every facet of international law, especially international humanitarian law and international human rights law, with utter impunity. It is trampling on the rule of law, confident that it will not be held to account for its belligerence, owing to the persistent paralysis within the Security Council.

Malaysia reiterates its demand that Israel be compelled to abide by the rule of law. It must cease its offensive in Gaza immediately and accept a lasting ceasefire. It must also take every possible measure to guarantee the unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid into and throughout Gaza at scale, and it must stop attacking humanitarian personnel. In addition, the international community should immediately ban the sale and supply of arms and ammunition to Israel. All financial support

enabling Israel to continue its barbaric aggression should also be terminated now. Punitive measures such as sanctions, visa denials and travel restrictions should be imposed on members of the settler communities to hold them accountable for their illegal actions and brutal violence. The Security Council must shoulder its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. It must act swiftly, responsibly and decisively to stop Israel’s unlawful collective punishment of Palestinians, as well as the further erosion of a sovereign Palestinian State. It must ensure that Israel abides by its resolutions and hold it to account for defying their provisions. We want to take this opportunity to reaffirm our full support for Palestine’s full membership in the United Nations. It is high time that this long-overdue recognition was realized.

The veto and its undemocratic nature run counter to the very principles that the United Nations was built on. It has no place in the modern democratic multilateral architecture. Malaysia maintains its position that the exercise of the right to the veto by permanent members of the Security Council should be regulated to prevent its unjustifiable use or abuse. Its application should be prohibited in situations involving mass atrocity crimes, such as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. We are also of the view that if it is to be effective and ensure additional accountability, the veto should be exercised by at least two of the five permanent members and supported by three non-permanent Council members. That decision would then have to be supported by the General Assembly with a simple majority vote. Ultimately, however, we maintain that the veto should be abolished altogether. Malaysia will continue to work constructively with other Member States through the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform with a view to improving the United Nations so that it is more efficient, open, transparent and inclusive.

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

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.