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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Kariuki	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mr. Gaouaoui
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Ecuador	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	Japan	Mr. Yamazaki
	Malta	Mr. Camilleri
	Mozambique	Mr. Irachande Gouveia
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sierra Leone	Mr. George
	Slovenia	Mrs. Blokar Drobič
	Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Lisa Doughten, Director of the Financing and Partnerships Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; Mr. Gilles Michaud, Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, Department of Safety and Security; and Ms. Abby Stoddard, co-founder and partner at Humanitarian Outcomes.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Ms. Doughten.

Ms. Doughten: I want to thank the United Kingdom for convening this meeting and for giving us the opportunity to brief Council members on the protection of humanitarian and United Nations personnel, premises and assets.

This is a deeply personal issue for me, for the United Nations, for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and for the global humanitarian community we represent. Over the years, many of us working for the United Nations and the humanitarian sector have lost colleagues and friends — people who devoted their lives to supporting their fellow human beings in their time of need. But the past two years in particular have been devastating. In 2023, we lost 280 aid workers across 20 countries, according to the Aid Worker Security Database. That is a shocking 137 per cent increase from 2022. But, as we will hear from Abby Stoddard, this year has been even worse. Numerous other aid workers have been injured, kidnapped, attacked or arbitrarily detained in countries including Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Mali, Myanmar, South Sudan, the Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen.

Much of the unprecedented surge in aid worker casualties is due to the situation in Gaza. Since 7 October 2023, more than 330 humanitarian workers have lost their lives. Most of them were staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Some were with their families in their homes, others were at work in

UNRWA offices and shelters. Those numbers signal a disturbing lack of regard for the lives of civilians and humanitarian and United Nations workers. There is no situation in recent history that compares. As we gather today, seeking specific actions that the Security Council and the wider United Nations membership could take to increase the protection of aid workers, my first message is this: Please help to protect my colleagues in Gaza. Reducing violence and ensuring that all parties respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians are priorities. Without those measures, discussions about the safety of United Nations and humanitarian personnel in Gaza are, at best, unrealistic.

Despite the very real dangers, humanitarian and United Nations personnel continue to show incredible commitment to staying and delivering, wherever people are in need. As of October, global humanitarian operations have provided life-saving aid to more than 116 million people worldwide this year. I want to salute that remarkable achievement: it underscores the resourcefulness, resilience and courage of humanitarian workers in the face of extraordinary challenges. But as the Secretary-General reminded us on this year's World Humanitarian Day (see SG/SM/22337), celebrating humanitarians is not enough; we must all do more to protect and safeguard our common humanity.

The United Nations, humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations are doing everything they can to significantly enhance our security risk management. As a result, aid workers can now reach more people in need in increasingly complex environments. Member States' political and financial support for the United Nations Department of Safety and Security is indispensable for that important work. However, when parties to conflict choose to target humanitarian workers or choose to ignore their obligations under international law to spare them, then no amount of security management will help those workers. We therefore once again welcome the Council's decision to tackle the issue head-on by adopting resolution 2730 (2024) in May. In that resolution, the Council requested the Secretary-General to recommend ways to strengthen the protection of humanitarian and United Nations personnel. Today I want to present the Council with three critical areas for action: a clear condemnation of attacks against aid workers, accountability, and more support for victims and survivors of harm. Those areas were identified following extensive consultations with our humanitarian partners.

First, when it comes to a clear condemnation of attacks against aid workers, our partners want to see renewed, unequivocal political support from the Council and Member States for aid workers and their safety. They want Council members to use diplomatic and economic pressure to force respect for international law. They demand, as does the Secretary-General, an end to arms transfers to anyone violating international law. They want Council members to support principled humanitarian action and contribute to a conducive environment for aid operations. That includes effective humanitarian exemptions across sanctions regimes and counter-terrorism legislation. That means unequivocally rejecting and countering misinformation, disinformation and hate speech that target United Nations and humanitarian organizations and staff and challenging gratuitous campaigns and legal proceedings against United Nations and humanitarian personnel, such as the unacceptable recent targeting of UNRWA.

Secondly, with regard to accountability, our partners are concerned by the lack of accountability for perpetrators of crimes against humanitarian workers, and by how that lack emboldens further offences. They want to see more systematic and universal accountability for serious violations. They want Member States to fight impunity with political will and action, including through legislation that ensures accountability for crimes against humanitarian workers, both international and domestic. And they want the Security Council to do more to ensure accountability, including by encouraging international cooperation to facilitate investigations and prosecutions and, where national jurisdictions fail, to establish international mechanisms or refer matters to the International Criminal Court.

Thirdly, there is a need for more support for humanitarian workers who are victims and survivors of harm. Our partners want the international community to adopt a survivor-centred approach that allows survivors to directly participate in global discussions, including here in the Security Council. They also call for reparations and legal aid for survivors and families. Our partners urgently ask for mental-health support and trauma counselling for survivors. That is essential for national and locally recruited staff, who account for more than 95 per cent of survivors and face unimaginable personal losses.

This year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions — the cornerstone of international humanitarian law, which is now under unprecedented

strain. As we look to the next steps on resolution 2730 (2024), we urge the Council to champion action that protects humanitarian and United Nations personnel, ensures accountability for those who harm them and helps survivors and families to rebuild their lives. This is a call to reaffirm the fact that respect for international law is non-negotiable. Impunity for crimes against aid workers must end, and their voices deserve to be heard at the highest levels, including here in this Chamber. Together, let us transform our collective commitments into meaningful actions that safeguard the people at the heart of humanitarian efforts and, through them, the millions of lives they strive to save.

The President: I thank Ms. Doughten for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Michaud.

Mr. Michaud: This is the first time in my five years as Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security that I brief the Security Council in open meeting. That speaks to the seriousness with which the Council views the safety and security of United Nations and humanitarian personnel, and I thank the Council for that.

But it also speaks to the gravity of where we are today. Resolution 2730 (2024), adopted in May by the Council, has never been so vital. We need collective action to protect those who dedicate their lives to people in need. Their security is not just a moral obligation; it is essential to the success of the mandates entrusted to us, including by the Council.

The United Nations Department of Safety and Security was created almost 20 years ago. Its beginnings lie in a series of catastrophic security incidents that claimed the lives of United Nations personnel. Back then, the United Nations operated in a handful of high-risk environments, with non-State armed groups posing the main threat. Today United Nations operations face greater complexity and greater needs in more high-risk areas and threats to United Nations and humanitarian personnel, including from State actors. We have shifted from dealing with one or two major emergencies each year to navigating multiple, overlapping crises of unprecedented scale.

Allow me to offer four examples from what is, alas, a much longer list.

In Gaza, the conflict has pushed us to the very limits of acceptable risk. The war has inflicted a profound psychosocial toll on United Nations personnel

and their families, including trauma, grief, moral injury and despair. Those effects extend beyond the epicentre, having an impact on colleagues in the region and around the world.

In Lebanon, we are seeing similar trends. Many United Nations staff have had to leave their homes, more than 50 of which have been destroyed. Yet they continue to serve the United Nations as it works to support the Lebanese people.

In Haiti, urban conflict is putting our security risk management approach to the test, making every aspect of delivering life-saving assistance more challenging.

And in Somalia, many of our locally recruited personnel take extreme measures while going to work. Some change taxis multiple times, conceal their United Nations identity within their communities and keep their employment secret even from their families. The personal risks they endure are a testament to their dedication.

No person and no United Nations colleague should have their life upended by conflict, and we cannot take their resilience for granted. Prolonged danger takes a serious toll on psychosocial well-being and on one's ability to carry out essential humanitarian work. My Department's Critical Incident Stress Management Unit assesses that nearly half of United Nations personnel in conflict zones report symptoms of post-traumatic stress. Locally recruited personnel, who make up the majority of those affected, especially women, frequently bear the heaviest burden. They remain on the front lines while facing unimaginable personal losses — loved ones, homes and even their sense of security. I am truly in awe of all our national colleagues. They embody resilience and commitment in the face of immense challenges. But we must do more to protect them better, prepare them better and support their recovery. They are one of my top priorities.

In recent years, the United Nations and humanitarian workers have been called upon to work in ever-more dangerous places. We work in spite of war and often because of it, frequently finding ourselves directly in harm's way. Without individuals willing to serve under those conditions, the humanitarian operations, peacekeeping efforts and political mandates supported by the Council would simply cease to function. They are the backbone of our collective work, and they deserve our unwavering support and the most effective security measures to protect them.

Our ability to operate safely also hinges on effective partnerships. In the Sudan, for example, amid widespread destruction and displacement, our collaboration through the Saving Lives Together framework has facilitated the delivery of critical humanitarian assistance to millions of forcibly displaced people. In Ukraine, our approach to risk management is anchored in integrated operations with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other partners, providing life-saving assistance while maintaining the safety of our personnel.

Let me be clear: my biggest concern is the profound lack of accountability for violence against humanitarian workers and United Nations personnel. And it is there that, now more than ever, we need the Council to take action. Host States and States Members of the United Nations bear the primary responsibility for the safety and security of our personnel and the protection of our premises. Normative frameworks, such as the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and its Optional Protocol, should gain universal support. Only 95 States have joined the Convention, and a mere 33 have joined the Optional Protocol, with no new signatories in nearly a decade. I urge all Member States to join both agreements, and I call on those already committed to fully implement them.

The Convention on Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, which defines numerous issues relating to the United Nations, its premises, assets and officials, and host country agreements must be upheld. As members heard from my colleague from OCHA and as you will hear from the representative of Humanitarian Outcomes, more needs to be done. I want to stress that the entire community of Member States must speak with moral clarity about the need to protect humanitarian workers and ensure accountability for acts of violence, by any State and non-State actors, against humanitarian workers.

I would like to offer a more operational consideration that also lies within the Council's influence. For example, when peacekeeping and political missions transition or close, as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq or Mali, security must be integrated into planning from the outset. In Mali, my Department had to adapt rapidly from relying on 365 integrated security personnel to having only 69 by the end of liquidation, this December. Those drastic reductions not only affect the safety and security of United Nations personnel, but also limit our capacity to enable humanitarian delivery. Such fundamental changes require advance planning

and should be explicitly considered by the Council when mission transitions and closures are discussed.

We in the United Nations and the humanitarian community at large have always risen to the task of delivering life-saving assistance in the world's most dangerous places. It is the mission we have chosen. But the risks have grown. For those aiding the most vulnerable, once unthinkable levels of insecurity have become the norm. My one fear is this — that the international community simply accepts that humanitarians go to work facing the daily, immediate risk of making the ultimate sacrifice. The Council must reaffirm that that should not — and will not — be accepted.

Next year, as I mentioned earlier, the Department of Safety and Security will mark its twentieth anniversary. That milestone is compelling us to reflect on how the United Nations security management system has evolved and matured to meet the challenges of a changing world. But the anniversary also reminds us of the work still to be done, particularly in ensuring that safety and security are integral to all aspects of United Nations operations.

This year, United Nations colleagues have faced unprecedented levels of violence, testing our resilience and resolve. I ask for the Council's solidarity and courage to ensure accountability for those who harm United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers. I ask Council members to speak publicly in support of United Nations personnel and our humanitarian partners. The Council members' voices carry weight. I ask the Council to translate words into meaningful action, using the mechanisms it has at its disposal. Together, let us ensure that those who bring hope and relief to the world's most vulnerable can do so in safety.

The President: I thank Mr. Michaud for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Stoddard.

Ms. Stoddard: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to speak to the Council about the intensifying attacks against humanitarian personnel.

My research group, Humanitarian Outcomes, runs the Aid Worker Security Database, which tracks major incidents of violence against aid workers around the world. Our data goes back to the late 1990s, and over that time the numbers show a marked rise in insecurity for humanitarian operations. Thirty years ago, fatal attacks on aid workers were not common and the main risks to humanitarian staff were accidents and

illnesses. Today it is violence — both collateral and targeted — that claims more aid worker lives than any other work-related cause.

As mentioned, last year — 2023 — was the deadliest year for aid workers we had ever recorded, with 280 reported fatalities. That is more than double the annual average of the previous 10 years. That surge reflects violence and major warfare and mass civilian losses in Gaza and the Sudan, as well as ongoing violence in South Sudan, along with 17 other humanitarian response settings where aid workers lost their lives. The death toll is in addition to at least 91 kidnappings and hundreds of serious injuries. Of those victims, 96 per cent are national aid workers — providing aid to people within their own countries. Now, with 2024 not yet over, aid worker fatality numbers have already exceeded last year's awful total. As of this morning, the number killed stands at 282 and counting. Rather than a short-term spike, in other words, it appears we are looking at something more like a step change.

Another alarming trend in the data I would point members to is this — in recent years, State actors are responsible for the greater share of aid worker deaths as opposed to non-State armed groups and criminals. That, again, is a function of the type and intensity of conflicts now occurring. It is also partly the result of failures of deconfliction and resulting military strikes on humanitarian facilities and movements, despite the aid groups' consistent participation in humanitarian notification systems. And we have growing evidence of rising detentions and bureaucratic obstacles to access for humanitarian material and personnel imposed by State Governments and national militaries.

The fact that the very actors charged with upholding international humanitarian law and with protecting and facilitating humanitarian aid have instead become the main source of threat and impediment to it speaks to the gravity of the situation and has serious implications not only for humanitarian access to people in need, but to global stability and order.

The Security Council can play a critical role in reducing the risk to humanitarian aid workers so that more civilians can be safely reached by life-saving assistance. It has taken some important steps already. Resolution 2730 (2024) lays the groundwork for action towards greater protection and accountability, and I would like to strongly echo the calls to action we heard from Under-Secretary-General Michaud and Ms. Dougherty today. I would add that research we have

done in this area suggests the Council and Member States could act decisively to reduce the risk in the further following ways.

First, they could take additional, concrete measures to address impunity. As Council members know, attacks on aid workers are almost never investigated or prosecuted. Resolution 2730 (2024) calls for countries to conduct full, prompt, impartial and effective investigations of violations of international humanitarian law. In addition, or where that fails to prompt national-level action, the Council could consider holding ad hoc tribunals or promoting other international legal means of achieving justice and disincentivizing those attacks.

Secondly, they could work to rebuild trust in deconfliction for humanitarian operations. Many humanitarians now distrust the notification systems, even fearing that their participation in some of those mechanisms might increase their risk owing to conflict parties acting in bad faith. Collective action is needed to improve protocols and create accountability mechanisms for when deconfliction fails.

And thirdly, they could call on States and international organizations to empower local and national humanitarian actors, ensuring that they are accorded the same protections as United Nations and other international agencies. Local actors should be encouraged and helped to report all attacks and violations of international humanitarian law they experience, and they should be provided with equal resources and means of redress. That will also improve efforts to collect data on those incidents to ensure that the full scope and depth of the problem is known.

Lastly, I would like to re-emphasize that, although the life of a humanitarian aid worker is worth no more or less than any other civilian affected by war, the steep rise in aid worker killings sends a particular signal of rising instability and decaying norms of decency and humanity. With every step-change comes the risk that we adapt to it, as the unthinkable becomes the new normal. I urge us all to push back against that normalization and to retain the capacity to be shocked and the motivation to take corrective action. Strengthening protections for aid workers — and insisting on real accountability for violence against them — not only helps meet urgent humanitarian needs, but it supports stability and makes peacebuilding more possible.

The President: I thank Ms. Stoddard for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to start by thanking Mr. Gilles Michaud, Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, Department of Safety and Security, for his first Security Council briefing, as well as Ms. Lisa Doughten, Director of Financing and Partnerships Division, Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. I also thank Ms. Abby Stoddard. We heard her message loud and clear.

In May, Switzerland had the honour of introducing resolution 2730 (2024), which was adopted by the Security Council. It was an urgent response to the alarming situation about which we just heard. By adopting that resolution, we all committed to better protecting and respecting humanitarian personnel and United Nations and associated personnel, including national and locally recruited personnel. Switzerland wishes to pay tribute to them. Their courage and action are essential to saving and preserving the dignity of millions of lives, despite the increasing risks and difficult conditions. Our thoughts are with the families of those who have lost their lives.

We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. Today Switzerland wishes to convey two key messages.

Our first message is addressed to all Member States. It is an urgent call for the full implementation of resolution 2730 (2024). The adoption of that resolution does not mean the end of our commitment, but rather its beginning, because the trend, as we heard, is more than alarming. This morning's numbers speak for themselves. Those who provide support also need protection, whether they find themselves in Gaza, Lebanon, the Sudan, Somalia, Haiti or elsewhere. As States, we cannot remain mere observers. We can — and must — act without delay. Switzerland welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendations, which show us how we can better prevent attacks on humanitarian and United Nations personnel and strengthen their protection. They offer concrete avenues for action to better implement resolution 2730 (2024) and international humanitarian law. I would like to highlight a few aspects.

First of all, our legal responsibility is paramount. Law, whether it be international or national, is one of our most powerful tools. States must respect and protect humanitarian personnel, investigate

violations and, in the absence of action, refer cases to international tribunals. At the national level, we must guarantee safe and unhindered humanitarian access, criminalize attacks on humanitarian personnel, facilitate the granting of visas and include the necessary humanitarian exemptions in our legislation. Beyond the law, the Secretary-General also recommends that we lead by example. In a world where misinformation undermines trust and hampers humanitarian action, we have a duty to fight that scourge and to provide objective information about the work and role of humanitarian and United Nations personnel. We must also provide ourselves with the resources to meet our obligations. Within the United Nations, we emphasize the crucial role played by the Department of Safety and Security in ensuring the safety of United Nations workers, whatever the context of their engagement. It must be supported. Lastly, we must also support the victims of violence and amplify their voices to ensure that their suffering is not repeated.

Our second message is addressed to us, the members of the Security Council: let us listen and act. Around this table, let us remain attentive to the voices of humanitarian actors. They are the best compass to guide our action. Let us put aside political differences to prioritize the protection of human lives and humanitarian principles. It is our duty to keep our full attention on those who are saving thousands of lives, on their appeals and the alerts that they send us. In resolution 2730 (2024), the Security Council mandated the Secretary-General to provide an annual briefing on the challenges, opportunities and progress made in strengthening the protection, safety and security of humanitarian and United Nations personnel. That will be an essential step in guiding our collective action. The Secretary-General calls on the Council to place the protection of civilians, humanitarian workers and United Nations personnel at the heart of our decisions. Let us heed his call. Whether it be in examining geographical contexts, defining mandates or adopting resolutions, that priority must guide our every action, at all times.

Switzerland welcomes the growing commitment of States to the protection of humanitarian and United Nations personnel. In May, 98 countries co-sponsored resolution 2730 (2024). In September, at Australia's initiative, a ministerial group for the protection of humanitarian personnel was created, bringing together nine States, including Switzerland, representing different regions of the world. Just this

morning, 116 delegations reaffirmed their commitment to the protection of humanitarian and United Nations personnel outside the Chamber. Such a large number of countries committed to improving the current situation has the power to make a difference. Switzerland will continue to work with them for the protection of humanitarian and United Nations personnel.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): I thank Under-Secretary-General Michaud, Director Doughnten and Ms. Stoddard for their sobering briefings.

Japan remains deeply concerned about the escalating risks faced by humanitarian workers, as 2024 has tragically become the deadliest year on record for those dedicated to providing life-saving assistance. The ongoing war in Gaza has significantly contributed to that grim milestone, with more than 320 humanitarian workers losing their lives since 7 October 2023. Many of them perished while delivering vital assistance, with the majority being staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The risks faced by aid workers extend far beyond Gaza. Reports of severe violence, kidnappings, injuries, harassment and arbitrary detentions are alarmingly high in countries such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, the Sudan, Ukraine, Yemen and others. In those dire circumstances, Japan welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendations on preventing and responding to violence and threats against humanitarian workers, strengthening accountability and improving protection for humanitarian personnel and assets, as requested by resolution 2730 (2024), led by Switzerland and co-sponsored by Japan.

Japan would like to highlight five points in response to those recommendations.

First, international humanitarian law is a fundamental obligation that must be upheld. Japan strongly urges all parties to comply with international law, including international humanitarian law. We also underscore the important work of the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission and advocate for its activities to be strengthened.

Secondly, it is critical to strengthen measures to ensure accountability for violations of international humanitarian law. Persons allegedly responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law must be held accountable, and justice under the rule of law must be done. From that perspective, Japan

remains committed to supporting the International Criminal Court.

Thirdly, Japan also attaches great importance to the psychosocial well-being of humanitarian personnel and their family members, particularly those operating in high-risk environments. Those challenges, though not always visible, are significant. Drawing from its own disaster response experience, Japan recognizes the importance of mental health support for both victims and aid providers. To that end, Japan has contributed financial resources to the Department of Safety and Security (DSS) project Capacity-building for Crisis Psychosocial Support, which has been enhancing the capacity of United Nations mental health experts by updating training programmes since January.

Fourthly, Japan has long emphasized the need for safe and smooth peace operation transitions during the drawdowns of peace missions, particularly with regard to the safety and security of humanitarian personnel. Their drawdowns, whether owing to political circumstances to exit the country or successful completions, often increase risks for aid workers. The Security Council must plan transitions carefully and early, leveraging the expertise of United Nations peacekeeping missions, special political missions, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, DSS, the Peacebuilding Commission, United Nations country teams and other relevant bodies to mitigate security risks and ensure the continuity of assistance.

Finally, it is essential to sustain the momentum generated by the adoption of resolution 2730 (2024). In that regard, we hope that the declaration pursued by the Ministerial Group for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel, initiated by Australia, with Japan participating as a member, will garner widespread support when it is subsequently adopted. Such a declaration would symbolize the international community's unity and resolve to protect humanitarian personnel.

In conclusion, Japan reaffirms its unwavering commitment to protecting humanitarian workers. We call on the international community to collectively enhance measures to safeguard those vital actors, whose selfless efforts bring hope and relief to millions worldwide. Together, we must ensure that their courage and humanity are met not with violence, but the protection and respect that they deserve.

Mr. Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Michaud, Director

Doughten and Ms. Stoddard for their informative briefings, as well as the Secretary-General for his report.

In a context of widespread conflict and the rise in humanitarian crises, humanitarian workers provide essential services to millions of people in need of assistance and protection. Yet the deaths of humanitarian workers have reached an unprecedented number. As we just heard, with more than 280 of them killed in 33 countries, 2023 was the deadliest year on record for the global humanitarian community. Sadly, the tragic trend has worsened further in 2024. In a recent press release, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that 281 humanitarian workers have been killed so far in 2024. Extreme levels of violence in the Sudan and Gaza have contributed to the death toll. Added to that are the threats, arrests and prosecutions that they face, with non-governmental organizations and locally recruited staff members as the most vulnerable. Humanitarian work depends on those who carry it out. Without humanitarian workers, no aid is possible. It is civilians therefore who ultimately suffer the consequences of attacks, thereby highlighting the complex task faced by humanitarian organizations: accessing those most in need while, at the same time, ensuring the safety of their staff. The normalization of violence against humanitarian workers is unacceptable and seriously undermines aid operations. Saving lives should not cost lives.

In that context, Ecuador welcomes the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report and highlights the following points.

First, it is imperative to strengthen the monitoring systems for the safety of humanitarian personnel, which includes continuing to improve the quality of the incident data system. Humanitarian organizations must have access to information to strengthen their risk assessment and security management, which requires strengthening data-sharing mechanisms and facilitating support services.

Secondly, upholding the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence and respect for international humanitarian law are of the utmost importance. The adoption of resolution 2730 (2024) is a reminder of the obligation of parties to armed conflicts to protect humanitarian personnel and their premises and property. Similarly, disinformation that threatens the security and legitimacy of humanitarian actors must also be countered.

Thirdly, we have a collective obligation to hold perpetrators of crimes against humanitarian workers accountable by strengthening national justice procedures and, where appropriate, by resorting to international mechanisms in applying the principle of complementarity. This morning we heard about several such alternatives.

Lastly, we must continue to support the implementation of the United Nations Security Management System and promote compliance with the normative frameworks, including the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, which provide fundamental safeguards that enable humanitarian operations to carry out their work in the most difficult environments, as Under-Secretary-General Michaud recalled.

I conclude by repeating what I said earlier: saving lives should not cost lives.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank the representatives from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Safety and Security and Humanitarian Outcomes for their insightful briefings.

We are deeply appreciative of the United Nations and its partners' vital humanitarian efforts around the world. Humanitarian agencies support people in dire need, even in the most dangerous of situations. Not only that, but humanitarians are a critical part of the local communities where they serve. They are critical after crises recede and the news outlets move on, building capacity and resilience, and they amplify the voices of the most vulnerable in the halls of the power, such as this one, sharing what is happening on the ground and advocating for pragmatic solutions. I am particularly grateful to Switzerland for its leadership on resolution 2730 (2024), which solidified a consensus on the need for all parties to armed conflict to protect humanitarian workers in accordance with international humanitarian law. It is unacceptable that those who assist and protect the most vulnerable would themselves be the target of violence.

Earlier this year, Houthi militants rounded up scores of United Nations and diplomatic staff, all of whom were working to bring life-saving assistance to the Yemeni people. In Ukraine, members of Russia's forces have inflicted unconscionable acts of brutality on civilians, including torture and the forcible transfer and the deportation of children. Those acts are not random or spontaneous, but part of the Kremlin's widespread

and systematic efforts against the Ukrainian people. In Gaza, Palestinians civilians have endured sheer hell in that war. Far too many civilians have been killed, including thousands of children. More than 300 humanitarian workers have been killed — a number higher than in any other conflict in the United Nations history. It is heartbreaking. It is unacceptable. We are deeply concerned about the insufficient amount of aid reaching Palestinian civilians in Gaza. It is critical that humanitarian pauses be implemented to enable a surge of life-saving assistance and protect the very humanitarians whose selfless acts we are discussing today. The United States continues to urge all parties to facilitate the unhindered movement of humanitarian and commercial convoys into and throughout Gaza. We have continued — and will continue — to make clear to Israel that it must do more to facilitate the entry and delivery of aid and commercial goods inside Gaza. The fact that Hamas's actions endanger civilians does not negate Israel's responsibility to protect civilians, including humanitarian personnel.

In Lebanon, we are deeply concerned about reports of thousands of people killed and injured, often in densely populated urban areas far from the Blue Line. We were saddened by the deaths of two staff members from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in September and remain concerned about the displacement of aid workers and the civilians whom they are working to serve. We reiterate our call on all parties to protect civilians, civilian infrastructure and humanitarian operations, to ensure humanitarian access in all parts of Lebanon and to abide by their obligations under international law. As we have said many times, only a diplomatic resolution will enable civilians on both sides of the Blue Line to return to their homes. Israel has the right to protect its citizens from Hizbullah, which has fired thousands of missiles and rockets over the past year alone. However, we have made it clear to Israel that it has a responsibility to do far more to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure.

We are also concerned about the safety and security of humanitarian staff in the Sudan. Since the start of the conflict, the fighting has killed 50 aid workers and injured many others. Dozens of humanitarian staff have been detained and some still remain unaccounted for. We continue to call on the parties to uphold the commitments they made in Jeddah, including to enable the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief and personnel, as well as the protection of humanitarian workers. We must also note that, despite the critical

need for aid, Russia obstructed the Council's adoption of draft resolution S/2024/826, aimed at addressing the catastrophic situation in the Sudan, and that Russia is playing both sides of the conflict to advance its own political objectives. That is simply unconscionable.

The United States position is clear. The Geneva Conventions are as important today as they were 75 years ago, which is why we joined the call earlier this year for a renewed commitment to them. I can assure Council members that we will continue advocating for the protection of humanitarian personnel everywhere around the world.

Mr. George (Sierra Leone): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this very important briefing on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. I also thank Director Lisa Doughten from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as well as Mr. Gilles Michaud, Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, Department of Safety and Security, and Ms. Abby Stoddard for their sobering and invaluable briefings.

The protection of civilians in armed conflict is not just a matter of global policy for Sierra Leone. It is rooted in our nation's lived experience. In 1999, the adoption of resolution 1270 (1999) authorized the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) with the first explicit mandate to protect civilians from threats of physical violence. The achievements and challenges of UNAMSIL provide invaluable lessons for the Council's work today.

The civil war in Sierra Leone, marked by unspeakable atrocities against civilians, brought the urgency to ensure the protection of civilians to the forefront. Widespread violations, including sexual violence, the forced recruitment of child soldiers and attacks on humanitarian workers, underscored the devastating consequences of conflict on non-combatants. The innovative steps taken by the international community to protect civilians during that period — although not without challenges — demonstrate what is possible when the Security Council acts decisively.

Sierra Leone therefore welcomes the recommendations of the Secretary-General, as contained in his letter to the President of the Security Council, as contained in document S/2024/852. Those recommendations are a timely and necessary response to paragraphs 16 (a) and (b) of resolution 2730 (2024), which call for concrete measures to enhance the protection of humanitarian personnel, United Nations

personnel — including national and locally recruited staff — and their premises and assets. The report of the Secretary-General underscores the Council's enduring commitment to international humanitarian law, even in the face of contemporary challenges. Resolution 2730 (2024) reaffirms the obligation of all States to respect and protect humanitarian and United Nations personnel under international law. That responsibility is pivotal for safeguarding civilians and civilian objects, particularly in conflict zones. Sierra Leone is therefore proud to have co-sponsored that resolution.

We reiterate our steadfast commitment to international humanitarian law. The protection of civilians and humanitarian personnel remains a critical priority for preserving global peace and security. In that regard, allow me to highlight the following points in relation to the recommendations of the Secretary-General.

First, Sierra Leone strongly supports the primacy of international law, including international humanitarian law. The obligation to respect international humanitarian law is non-reciprocal and binding on all parties, regardless of whether they adhere to it. We are therefore deeply concerned about the deliberate spread of misinformation and harmful propaganda targeting humanitarian personnel during conflicts. Such actions distort realities, influence public opinion and jeopardize the safety and effectiveness of humanitarian efforts. Sierra Leone urges all parties to conflicts to refrain from practices of misinformation and disinformation.

Secondly, the ability of humanitarian organizations to operate without obstruction and in alignment with the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence must be preserved. We call on parties to conflicts to take concrete steps to ensure the safe and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need.

Thirdly, Sierra Leone supports the Secretary-General's call for robust contingency planning to mitigate risks to humanitarian personnel, including addressing incidents of sexual violence. Survivors must be empowered to actively participate in discussions at local, national and global levels, while ensuring that their voices inform policies on their protection. In addition, we recognize that parties to conflicts bear obligations under international humanitarian law to respect and protect humanitarian and United Nations personnel. Member States must fulfil those obligations

to ensure that humanitarian workers, especially locally recruited staff, are safeguarded.

In 2023 alone, 280 aid workers were killed, with hundreds more kidnapped or wounded. The numbers for 2024, as we heard today, are equally depressing. Sierra Leone stresses the urgent need for accountability through competent investigative mechanisms that ensure justice for victims and address their grievances. All violations of international law, particularly international humanitarian law, must be rigorously investigated and the perpetrators brought to book in order to prevent impunity.

I would be remiss if I did not commend Switzerland for its leadership during its tenure as a non-permanent Council member. Its contributions have significantly strengthened respect for international humanitarian law within the Council's work.

Finally, Sierra Leone urges the Council to remain seized of the gaps and challenges faced by civilians in armed conflict, especially humanitarian workers. We call for sustained focus on this critical issue in order to protect those who risk their lives to provide aid and alleviate suffering.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Michaud, Ms. Doughten and Ms. Stoddard for their briefings. I also thank the Secretary-General for his recommendations, which must be implemented as soon as possible.

The year 2024 has been a deadly year for humanitarian workers. The majority of the 281 humanitarian workers killed were local personnel from the communities they were helping, in Gaza, the West Bank, the Sudan, Ukraine, Burma, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere.

France condemns in the strongest terms the massive violations committed against humanitarian workers. We call for the release of those humanitarian workers who are being arbitrarily detained, particularly in Yemen. In the face of such violence, it is our responsibility to guarantee respect for international humanitarian law and the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, distinction, precaution, proportionality and the prohibition of unnecessary suffering.

The Geneva Conventions of 1949 are universal and impose the obligation on parties to armed conflicts to protect humanitarian workers in times of conflict. All parties to conflicts must comply with that obligation, which is not subject to any condition of reciprocity.

The Security Council must ensure that resolution 2730 (2024), which was adopted in May (see S/PV.9634), is implemented. Safe and unhindered access to populations in need must be guaranteed. We must also step up the fight against disinformation and the stigmatization of humanitarian actors. The Security Council must act, whenever violations occur, to ensure that those responsible are held to account.

France makes respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of humanitarian personnel a priority. In recent years, we have mobilized the international community in Paris to respond to humanitarian crises in Ukraine, Gaza, the Sudan and Lebanon. In September, here in New York, France participated with Brazil, China, Jordan, Kazakhstan and South Africa in an initiative launched by the International Committee of the Red Cross to revitalize political commitment to international humanitarian law and reaffirm its universality. That initiative is due to culminate in a high-level meeting in 2026. We must find ways to better protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, health services, medical personnel and humanitarian workers, and to meet existing and emerging challenges.

France welcomes the holding of the thirty-fourth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent at the end of October 2024 in Geneva and the adoption during the Conference of a resolution entitled "Protecting civilians and other protected persons and objects against the potential human cost of information and communications technology activities during armed conflict".

Given the scale of the violence, it is urgent that we take action and live up to our commitments and responsibilities.

Mr. Camilleri (Malta): I thank our briefers — Ms. Lisa Doughten, Under-Secretary-General Gilles Michau — and Ms. Stoddard for their insightful yet harrowing messages to us today.

Throughout our elected term on the Council, we have witnessed the two deadliest years on record for medical, humanitarian and United Nations personnel, as we just heard from Director. Doughten. From Gaza to the Sudan and Ukraine to the Democratic Republic of Congo, humanitarian workers and United Nations staff continue to be targeted. Alarming, the vast majority of those killed are national and locally recruited staff, who form the backbone of humanitarian operations. In both 2023 and 2024, over 500 humanitarian workers were

killed, injured or kidnapped. In both years, more than half of killings took place in the occupied Palestinian territory. That devastating and criminal trend comes at a time of profound upheaval, where international humanitarian law is increasingly disregarded. We are witnessing an age of impunity, with parties seeking to politicize and undermine aid operations around the world.

In Gaza, the humanitarian principles have been weaponized to deny aid to millions. United Nations staff and humanitarian workers have been branded as terrorists or as legitimate targets by Israel, undermining their protected status and directly contravening the Geneva Conventions. Israeli legislation directly targeting and preventing the irreplaceable work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is deeply troubling; yet it exemplifies the politicization of aid and an age of impunity in action. Such decisions can only undermine the United Nations, its agencies and implementing partners. They will only make it harder for those who rely on their life-saving assistance.

In the Sudan, humanitarian access continues to be politicized and is now treated as a negotiable factor, rather than a legal obligation of the parties. Sovereignty has been instrumentalized to deny food to starving populations across borders and conflict lines, exacerbating human suffering and prolonging conflict. Regrettably, rather than exerting our collective political influence as a Council to maximize relief efforts, we see calls for unhindered access and nationwide ceasefires replaced by weaker ad-hoc humanitarian corridors and temporary pauses.

Malta fully supports the calls and recommendations of the Secretary-General in his latest report as mandated by resolution 2730 (2024). We echo the urgent need for accountability mechanisms to address violations against United Nations and humanitarian personnel. We also recognize the critical role of the Council, the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice in ensuring justice and accountability for those egregious violations of international law.

Left unchecked, we will witness a dramatic reduction in individuals willing to become United Nations or humanitarian staff due to the fear of being targeted for their efforts. Those trends have profoundly troubling and far-reaching implications for how conflicts are waged in the twenty-first century. As we just heard from Under-Secretary-General Michaud,

the resilience of humanitarians must not be taken for granted.

As we mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, our multilateral system stands at a crossroads. In this time of crisis, we have a choice: to work together genuinely and constructively to uphold the laws and norms that underpin a more just, equitable and safe world, or to descend further into a landscape dominated by spin, false narratives, proxy conflicts and the denial of shared responsibilities. Over the past two years, Malta has demonstrated clearly which choice it has made. We have worked tirelessly to ensure that international humanitarian law and the fundamental humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality, humanity and neutrality have been at the core of our work in the Council.

We must collectively reaffirm our commitment to the principles and rules of international law and ensure their faithful implementation. Only through collective resolve can we protect those who dedicate their lives to saving others and preserve the humanity that binds us all together.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I extend my gratitude to Under-Secretary-General Michaud, Director Lisa Doughten and Ms. Abby Stoddard for their important briefings.

International humanitarian law affords specific protection to humanitarian personnel by deeming attacks against them, especially those identifiable by distinctive emblems, as war crimes. It is meant to ensure that essential aid reaches civilians in dire need, upholding humanity even amid conflict. Marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions and the twenty-fifth anniversary of resolution 1265 (1999), the timely adoption of resolution 2730 (2024), led by Switzerland in May, has served as a powerful reminder of the obligation to safeguard those who risk their lives to assist other human beings in their most desperate moments.

However, this year has seen a record 282 humanitarian aid workers lose their lives worldwide. In particular, the sacrifices of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East are appalling, with 247 deaths since 7 October last year. The grim picture continues in many other parts of the world, including Ukraine, the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria and Myanmar, where this year has been devastating for aid workers in terms of deaths and kidnappings.

Continued threats and attacks against humanitarian and United Nations personnel in armed conflicts are jeopardizing not only their own lives, but also the lives of the millions of civilians who depend on them. That is unacceptable. The Republic of Korea urges all parties to armed conflict to fully comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law. All humanitarian and United Nations personnel must be respected and protected so that they can continue their life-saving work.

It is also critical that all parties to armed conflict allow unhindered humanitarian access to all civilians in need. The frustrating examples are abundant: the attempts by the United Nations to support people in besieged northern Gaza have been denied or impeded by Israel; in Ukraine, humanitarian access cannot reach Russian-controlled areas; in the Sudan, humanitarian access through key cross-border and cross-line routes remains severely restricted; and in Myanmar, multiple parties are imposing constraints to prove who controls where.

The Republic of Korea further encourages all States to reaffirm their commitment to accountability, including through independent investigation, prosecution and cooperation with domestic and international courts. Those who commit serious violations of international humanitarian law should be held accountable in domestic and international courts, including the International Criminal Court, where State authorities are unable or unwilling to investigate them.

The protection of humanitarian personnel and respect for international humanitarian law is the very least obligation of a State as a member of the international community, despite differing geopolitical interests. I call for the immediate and full implementation of resolution 2730 (2024) by all actors. The Republic of Korea is committed to actively cooperating with all humanitarian and United Nations organizations.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We appreciate the briefings by Gilles Michaud and Lisa Doughten. We also listened attentively to the statement by the civil society representative.

Providing humanitarian assistance in a situation of armed conflict is one of the most dangerous activities. Ensuring the security of humanitarian personnel is a priority task in establishing effective mechanisms for the provision of humanitarian assistance. We pay tribute to the courage and dedication of the staff of international humanitarian agencies who, in difficult

circumstances, continue to carry out the most important task of preventing the suffering of civilians. We welcome the efforts of the Department for Safety and Security to coordinate the relevant activities.

The issue of the protection of humanitarian personnel is more urgent than ever before. The past year showed an “anti-record” in that regard, which was set in the Gaza Strip, where the death of more than 300 humanitarian workers was recorded, most of whom were United Nations employees, mainly personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Given the intense fighting, every effort must be made to prevent attacks and acts of violence against these brave people. However, there is only one way to solve that problem — through an immediate ceasefire and the quest for political and diplomatic solutions. That is what we have repeatedly called for. We continue to call on the members of the Security Council to provide that.

The Russian Federation consistently supports all measures aimed at ensuring the safety of humanitarian workers and United Nations personnel. We always prioritize equipping United Nations peace operations and ensuring the proper training of peacekeepers and personnel performing security functions to guarantee the safety of mission personnel and the effective performance of the tasks assigned to them. Russians are among the peacekeepers who died in the line of duty. We regret that those responsible for the death of Lieutenant Colonel Alexii Mizyura in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in March 2022 have not been punished.

At the same time, there is no doubt that, as they perform their main functions and stabilize the situation on the ground, any United Nations missions should be curtailed in a timely manner or transformed into other formats of international assistance. At the same time, the host country must fully assume responsibility for the protection of civilians and United Nations representatives in the country.

For today’s meeting, in accordance with resolution 2730 (2024), the Secretary-General presented recommendations on measures to prevent and respond to incidents of attack, intimidation, detention and harassment of humanitarian personnel. We received the recommendations essentially just one day before today’s meeting. It is hardly possible to provide an exhaustive analysis of them in that time frame, as we have only just begun. However, some aspects have already drawn attention.

We agree with the overall message of the recommendations that we do not have a “magic wand” in our hands that would neutralize existing risks. The only way, apart from building the necessary United Nations capacity to protect personnel, is to strictly comply with existing obligations in the area of international humanitarian law, primarily the 1949 Geneva Conventions for the protection of war victims and their Protocols Additional, which have crossed the 75-year mark. We are particularly disappointed to note that, even among the five permanent members of the Security Council, there are States that have not acceded to those treaties. We are convinced that the universalization of those instruments is important.

As for the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, it has not been implemented in practice. Quite a few questions arise about some of the recommendations made by the Secretary-General.

We are disappointed to note that the recommendations, when listing the principles of humanitarian assistance set out in General Assembly resolution 46/182, omit the important principle of agreement and coordination with national Governments. And that is the key factor in reducing risks to the safety of humanitarian personnel. It turns out that the current document omits the most important thing.

In addition, when listing obstacles to the work of humanitarian personnel, not a word is said about unilateral coercive measures, which are at times prohibitive barriers to the work of humanitarian workers. We held a thorough discussion on that topic yesterday, 25 November, at an informal meeting Arria Formula of Security Council members. I urge everyone to review it in detail. The recording of the broadcast is online.

The purpose of the recommendation in paragraph 6.2, which calls on the Security Council to establish new international accountability mechanisms or to refer the investigation to the so-called International Criminal Court (ICC), is unclear. It should be recalled that Russia abstained in the voting on resolution 2730 (2024), which many members mentioned today, precisely because of an attempt to tie it to “international courts and tribunals”. The history of international criminal justice since the Nuremberg and Tokyo tribunals is a history of failure. The International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and its successor, the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, will go down in

history for their double standards, loose interpretation of international law, inefficiency and high costs. The ICC has degenerated into a political instrument that has nothing to do with justice. We ask the Secretary-General to be guided by his earlier position that the ICC and the United Nations are separate organizations.

Another controversial idea in the recommendations is the invitation of some kind of “independent investigators” of international humanitarian law violations in circumstances where the State does not have the capacity or will to cooperate. Such “investigators” are rarely truly independent and almost immediately begin to promote the agenda of those who pay for their services.

What we did not see in the recommendations of the Secretary-General are the measures that the Secretariat itself should take in response to attacks on United Nations personnel. For example, an investigation into the alleged involvement of individual UNRWA staff members in the attacks on 7 October 2023 was promptly initiated, and the individuals concerned were suspended even before it was completed. At the same time, for some reason, to this day, no one is investigating the circumstances of the death of UNRWA employees in the Gaza Strip. And this is the biggest, truly unprecedented case in the history of the world Organization.

In conclusion, allow me to recall that our country took part in the formation of international humanitarian law as far back as at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Later on, the Soviet Union actively worked on the texts of the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols Additional, largely based on the experience of the Second World War. Russia will continue to uphold the need for strict compliance with the provisions of the Geneva Conventions, while countering attempts to replace them with politicized manipulation and to use the suffering of civilians for that purpose.

Mr. Irachande Gouveia (Mozambique): We thank the Director of Financing and Partnerships Division at the Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Ms. Doughten; Under-Secretary-General Michaud; and Ms. Stoddard for their sobering, yet insightful, contributions. More than our solidarity, they have our respect and empathy for the extraordinary bravery, courage, selflessness and dedication demonstrated by their colleagues and partners in going to the assistance of those in need all over the world.

The protection of civilians in armed conflicts, as well as the protection of protectors, lies at the heart

of our collective commitment to international peace and security. Yet the events during our mandate in the Security Council paint a grim picture, underscoring the persistent challenges we still face in that regard. It has been 25 years since the Council firmly placed the protection of civilians at the centre of its agenda in the wake of the conflict in Sierra Leone, 75 years since the adoption of the Geneva Conventions and six months since the adoption of resolution 2730 (2024), cornerstones of international humanitarian law.

Distressingly, recent reports indicate that the year 2024 may become the deadliest one on record for humanitarian personnel who risk their lives to aid civilians — a harrowing milestone that surpasses all previous records. The current disregard for civilian protection in armed conflicts, coupled with the erosion of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, is unacceptable. We must not allow that dangerous trajectory to become the new normal. Mozambique is deeply concerned about the increasing risks faced by humanitarian workers, especially local actors, who often operate on the front lines under perilous conditions. Their courage and dedication are matched only by the dangers they face. Threats to aid workers extend far beyond Gaza. Alarming levels of violence, kidnappings, injuries, harassment and arbitrary detention have been reported all over the world. Those situations demand urgent attention and decisive action.

Six months ago, during our May presidency, the Council adopted resolution 2730 (2024) (see S/PV.9634). It reaffirmed the presumption of immunity for humanitarian workers and ensured unimpeded access to those in greatest need. That resolution was a beacon of hope for many in the field. However, we regret to note that its implementation has fallen short of expectations. The resolution's objectives remain unfulfilled, highlighting the pressing need for concrete actions that yield meaningful outcomes. To address those challenges, and echoing Ms. Doughten, Ms. Stoddard and Under-Secretary-General Michaud, Mozambique proposes the following urgent key actions: strengthening legal protections for civilians and humanitarian workers, with robust accountability mechanisms for violations; expanding humanitarian exemptions to sanctions and counter-terrorism measures, while ensuring aid operations are not unintentionally hindered; and combating misinformation and disinformation that erode trust in humanitarian efforts, holding digital

platforms accountable for their role in spreading harmful narratives.

Protecting civilians and humanitarian workers is not merely a legal obligation; it is a moral imperative and a testament to our shared humanity. Indeed, injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Honouring the sacrifices of those who have lost their lives while serving others demands our profound respect and recognition. In that connection, it is essential that we continue to take decisive action to ensure the safety, dignity and protection of those who serve in challenging and dangerous environments. Their work is not only a lifeline for the vulnerable civilians in armed conflicts, but also a beacon of hope in the darkest of times.

Mr. Gaouaoui (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, please allow me to express our deep gratitude to you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. We also thank Mr. Gilles Michaud and Ms. Lisa Doughten for their comprehensive briefings. And we appreciate their work and reassure them of Algeria's full support. We also listened carefully to the presentation by the civil society representative.

The adoption of resolution 2730 (2024) came at a critical time, when humanitarian workers and United Nations personnel face unprecedented challenges as a result of the growing systematic attacks against them, particularly in the Gaza Strip and in Lebanon. The Israeli occupation has become the biggest perpetrator of violations against the safety and security of humanitarian workers in history. Our meeting today presents a unique opportunity to strengthen the international commitment to protect and ensure the safety of humanitarian workers and United Nations personnel, who serve as a lifeline for the millions who depend on humanitarian aid for survival.

It is unacceptable that humanitarian workers, whose presence should imply humanitarian protections for those near them, have themselves become the direct targets of parties to the conflict. Protecting humanitarian workers and ensuring a safe environment for their operations is a shared responsibility that requires the concerted efforts of all international actors at all levels. The Security Council has a particular responsibility in that regard. Accordingly, we would like to highlight the following key points, with a view to achieving the ultimate goal of providing the protection needed by humanitarian workers and supporting their efforts, which are, again, a lifeline for millions in need around the world.

First, international law must be respected, and those involved in attacks against humanitarian workers and United Nations facilities must be held to account. Such attacks are considered war crimes under international humanitarian law. We reiterate the need for Member States to fulfil their obligations under the Geneva Conventions and the Protocols Additional thereto. In that vein, we call for strengthened national oversight mechanisms to monitor compliance with international humanitarian law and to ensure transparent and independent investigations into all documented violations.

Secondly, humanitarian access must be facilitated, and humanitarian principles must be respected. All States need to streamline measures and provide special protection for humanitarian workers, including exemptions and logistical facilitations. They must also provide for humanitarian exceptions under national anti-terrorism legislation.

Thirdly, misinformation and disinformation must be addressed. Such campaigns lead to the erosion and undermining of local community trust in humanitarian action, thereby increasing the risks to humanitarian workers. As such, we stress the need to tackle this phenomenon through the dissemination of accurate information. We must also hold to account those responsible for spreading hate speech against humanitarian workers, which puts their lives at risk.

Fourthly, safety measures must be incorporated into the mandate of United Nations missions. The growing threats require a comprehensive review of security measures and their incorporation into all mandates that are authorized and adopted by the Security Council. We need to guarantee that sufficient security capacities exist to protect the workers while they go about their work in high-risk environments, whether in peace missions or humanitarian operations.

In conclusion, the protection of humanitarian workers and United Nations personnel is not only a moral imperative but a necessity to ensure the continuation of humanitarian action that contributes to the realization of international peace and security. Therefore, the Security Council needs to take practical steps to support and fully and effectively implement the recommendations provided for in the report of the secretary-General. We also renew our support to the efforts of the Department of Safety and Security in our Organisation.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. I also wish to thank Director Lisa Doughten, Under-Secretary-General Gilles Michaud and Ms. Abby Stoddard of Humanitarian Outcomes for their comprehensive briefings. I express Guyana's immense gratitude to them and their teams for the dedication and service they continue to render in these challenging times. Guyana also welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendations on measures to prevent and respond to attacks against humanitarian and United Nations personnel and their premises and assets.

This meeting is being held against the backdrop of an increase in global conflicts, which has significantly impacted the core of humanitarian efforts. The adoption of resolution 2730 (2024), six months, ago demonstrated an acknowledgment of that fact and the indispensable role of humanitarian personnel. It also represents our collective commitment and responsibility to safeguarding their safety and security as they risk their lives every day to provide humanitarian aid and support to those in need. Guyana remains deeply concerned about the increase in the frequency and severity of attacks against humanitarian workers and United Nations personnel, including national and locally recruited staff and their premises and assets. Even as they dedicate their lives to alleviating human suffering, they risk becoming targets of attacks, which places them at great risk of bodily harm and even death.

A grim record has been set: this year has been the deadliest on record for humanitarian workers, with a total of 281 of them killed globally. The United Nations has also reported and Ms. Doughten has reminded us that, since October last year, more than 333 aid workers were killed in Gaza alone, the majority of them staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East — another horrific record, as it represents the highest number ever of aid workers killed in a single conflict. Gaza is the epicentre of the killing of humanitarian workers. Not only are they killed, but they are also targeted.

When those among us who demonstrate the best of humanity, displaying immense courage to help others who are most in need, are wantonly killed in unprecedented numbers, and when, as Ms. Stoddard reminded us, such killings are perpetrated by States, then we must question where humanity is heading. We must resolve to do more to stop the spiral into the abyss of cruelty, inhumanity and disregard for international law. I take the opportunity to pay tribute

to those humanitarian personnel who have lost their lives in service and to express condolences to their colleagues and to their loved ones. I also wish to pay tribute to those who continue to work under extremely challenging circumstances.

In addition to the killings, there are reported cases of increased attacks against humanitarian workers, including harassment, violence, kidnappings and arbitrary detention in conflict areas such as Afghanistan, South Sudan, the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ukraine and Yemen, among other countries. The consequences of those incidents go beyond the loss of individual lives: humanitarian personnel are severely hindered in their delivery of essential aid to populations on the verge of disaster. Addressing that requires a multifaceted, coordinated and robust international response.

Given the alarming figures highlighted in our meeting today, it is clear that the world is facing an erosion of respect for international law, particularly international humanitarian law, which is fostering a culture of impunity and aggravating the risks faced by humanitarian personnel. This year marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions and 25 years since the protection of civilians was first recognized by the Security Council as integral to the maintenance of international peace and security. We must recommit to the principles and obligations espoused in the Geneva Conventions and take the measures necessary to ensure accountability for violations. That imperative involves taking tangible actions to reinforce the unacceptability of targeting aid workers, including, inter alia, by initiating transparent investigations and prosecutions of those responsible for causing undue harm to humanitarian personnel. We must also continue to work collaboratively to support initiatives that promote the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, create safer environments for humanitarian operations and scale up early-warning systems, which would benefit the personnel and the affected populations.

In conclusion, Guyana reaffirms its commitment to the protection of humanitarian workers and United Nations and associated personnel. As the Under-Secretary-General rightly said, no person and no United Nations colleague should have their life upended by conflict, and we must not take their resilience for granted. Resolution 2730 (2024) and the recommendations provided by the Secretary-General are key aspects of the road map to ensuring that those

on the front lines of humanitarian crises are protected from harm. Let us resolve to root our collective actions in truth, accountability and adherence to the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including international humanitarian law.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Michaud and Director Doughten for their briefings. I listened carefully to the statement by the civil society representative.

In May, the Security Council adopted resolution 2730 (2024), which sets out clear requirements for ensuring the safety and security of humanitarian and United Nations personnel, for guaranteeing unhindered humanitarian access and for holding those responsible for violations of the law accountable. Pursuant to that resolution, the Secretary-General made recommendations to the Council. China hopes that all parties will take the opportunity to work together to promote the implementation of the resolution and ensure the safety of humanitarian and United Nations personnel.

The humanitarian cause is a noble one, and the safety of humanitarian workers and United Nations personnel, who perform their duties amid war and make selfless sacrifice, should be fully protected. It is worrisome that, despite the repeated appeals from the international community and the resolutions adopted by the Council, violations and attacks against humanitarian and United Nations personnel remain widespread. We have seen the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) — a lifeline for more than 2 million people — being systematically discredited and suppressed. To date, 247 of its staff have died in conflict. In the Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen and elsewhere, humanitarian and United Nations personnel have continued to face violence, kidnapping, injury, harassment and detention, with serious impacts on humanitarian operations. In the face of that grave situation, the international community must take action and urge all parties to conflict to abide strictly by international humanitarian law, fully implement Council resolutions, ensure the safety and security of humanitarian and United Nations personnel and safeguard the space for humanitarian operations. In that connection, I wish to make four points.

First, every effort must be made to promote a ceasefire. Amid violence and conflict, no protection measures, however comprehensive, can shield

humanitarian and United Nations personnel from harm. The Council bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and, under all circumstances, it should therefore make the promotion of a ceasefire and a political settlement the focus of its efforts. China supports the Council's using all the options in its toolbox to that end.

Secondly, the obligation to protect must be duly fulfilled. All countries should discharge their obligations under international humanitarian law and make the implementation of the Geneva Conventions and the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel a political priority. States and parties to a conflict should facilitate humanitarian operations and guarantee safe and unhindered humanitarian access. Parties to conflicts should strengthen the training of military personnel in the fundamentals of international humanitarian law so as to avert harm to humanitarian and United Nations personnel.

Thirdly, safety and security guarantees must be provided. China supports the Security Council's decision to authorize the relevant missions to protect United Nations personnel in the light of the evolving situation on the ground. In developing transition and exit strategies, missions should also give full consideration to the security needs of United Nations personnel and of the country teams carrying out follow-up operations. It is essential to provide timely emergency medical care and psychological counselling services to the victims in order to help them heal the trauma and make an early recovery.

Fourthly, double standards must be firmly rejected. The world today is in turmoil, with armed conflicts continuing to flare up. Humanitarian and United Nations personnel working in various parts of the world, whether in Gaza or Afghanistan, in the Sudan or Somalia, are facing great risks. Their safety and security should be guaranteed and their concerns addressed, without distinction or bias.

In conclusion, I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all humanitarian and United Nations personnel on the front lines and to express our appreciation for their dedication and contribution. China stands ready to work with all parties to continue unrelenting efforts to ensure their safety and security.

Mrs. Blokar Drobšč (Slovenia): Let me begin by thanking Director Doughten of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Under-

Secretary-General Michaud and Ms. Stoddard for their valuable input.

The number of armed conflicts has reached unprecedented levels. War is a horrendous everyday reality for too many people around the world. Worse still, serious violations of international humanitarian law are increasing, and the rules are often completely disregarded. That is unacceptable. We once again remind all parties to all conflicts of their obligations under international humanitarian law. We also remind all parties of their obligation to ensure full, safe, rapid and unhindered humanitarian access to all civilians in need, without exceptions.

Let me address the following points.

First, in most armed conflicts, the United Nations and humanitarian personnel are the first to provide help to the civilian population. In many situations, they remain the only help. They serve with the utmost dedication in the most difficult and challenging situations, often with their own lives being endangered. A sad reminder of that is the fact that this year has, to date, become the deadliest in terms of deaths among humanitarian personnel. Despite the deteriorating conditions and safety concerns, they continue to operate in Gaza and the West Bank, Ukraine, the Sudan, Lebanon, Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan and Myanmar, to name a few places. Those are the most dangerous places for humanitarian workers and are, at the same time, places in which civilians need humanitarian aid most urgently. We call on all States to take all necessary steps to facilitate administrative procedures in order not to unduly delay or impede the provision of humanitarian assistance, as it is often the only lifeline for many civilians.

Secondly, the Council must do its utmost to support the work and ensure their safety and protection of humanitarian personnel. Resolution 2730 (2024) was a step in the right direction and a timely reminder for all parties to armed conflicts of their obligations at all times and in all circumstances, including in respect of the protection of humanitarian personnel. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's concrete recommendations to enhance the protection of humanitarian and United Nations and associated personnel. With that in mind, Slovenia joined Australia's open pledge on enhancing the protection of humanitarian personnel, launched last month in Geneva.

Thirdly, those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law must be held accountable. Every State should adopt legislation properly sanctioning violations of international humanitarian law. If States are not willing or able to investigate and prosecute, cases of grave violations should be referred to international courts, including the International Criminal Court. States should also adopt measures to prevent violence against humanitarian personnel. In that regard, more attention should be given to the issue of disinformation and misinformation regarding humanitarian personnel and the assistance they provide. That is extremely dangerous, even life-threatening. States should do their utmost to prevent disinformation, hate speech and the targeting of humanitarian personnel, as those phenomena may have very serious repercussions, both for the personnel and for civilians caught in the conflict. States should ensure public access to reliable and accurate information.

I will conclude by paying tribute to, and expressing Slovenia's great appreciation and support for, the work of the United Nations and humanitarian personnel, who, through their selfless efforts, work to alleviate the unbearable suffering of the civilian population. For that, they deserve our gratitude, and they deserve our protection.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

I thank Ms. Doughten, Under-Secretary-General Michaud and Ms. Stoddard for their sobering briefings today. The United Kingdom also welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendations on this subject.

The scale and severity of threats to humanitarian personnel are alarming. As we heard today, the year 2024 is already the deadliest one on record for humanitarian workers, and we have not yet reached the end. The tragic loss of life, including in Gaza, the Sudan and South Sudan, is a stark reminder of the dangers

faced by those who deliver life-saving assistance and provide hope in the toughest of circumstances.

Humanitarian workers, including national and local actors, should never be targeted for doing their jobs. We owe them more than words of support. I would like to highlight three actions that Member States must take.

The first is to facilitate rapid and full humanitarian access to all civilians in need and fully comply with international humanitarian law. That is a bare minimum and is reflected in the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which we have all ratified.

Secondly, Member States must take all feasible steps to ensure that effective and trusted deconfliction mechanisms are in place and utilized, in line with the obligations of parties to a conflict to protect humanitarian personnel. We urge States to investigate attacks swiftly and hold perpetrators to account.

Finally, more must be done to counter misinformation and disinformation, which pose an increasing threat to United Nations and humanitarian staff.

Attacks targeting humanitarian personnel are violations of international humanitarian law and are unacceptable. The Council must stand united in defending those who protect the most vulnerable. The United Kingdom thanks Switzerland for its leadership on resolution 2730 (2024), which we were happy to co-sponsor. We urge Member States to implement that resolution and to ensure the principles that we affirm today allow humanitarian workers to do their jobs safely and free from fear.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.