



General Assembly

Seventy-fourth session

2nd plenary meeting
Friday, 20 September 2019, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Muhammad-Bande (Nigeria)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 7

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items: reports of the General Committee

First report of the General Committee (A/74/250)

The President: I invite the General Assembly to direct its attention to section I of the report of the General Committee (A/74/250). In that section, the General Committee takes note of the information contained in paragraph 2.

I request the General Assembly to now direct its attention to section II, entitled “Organization of the session”, which contains a number of recommendations concerning the General Committee, rationalization of work, the closing date of the session, seating arrangements, schedule of meetings, the general debate and the conduct of meetings, among other things. I should like to highlight the following points.

In paragraph 31, on waiving the requirements of rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly to declare a meeting open, I should like to encourage delegations to be present in the meeting rooms at the scheduled time in order to promote the punctuality and efficiency of the Assembly’s proceedings.

In paragraph 34, the General Committee draws the attention of the General Assembly to paragraph 17 of resolution 73/341, in which the Assembly requested

the President of the General Assembly to reconsider the timing of the plenary meetings of the Assembly on the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization and on the report of the Security Council, in close coordination with the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, so that discussions of these important reports are not conducted in a perfunctory manner. In this connection, I should like to inform members that the plenary meeting on the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/74/1), originally scheduled for 8 October, will take place at a later date to be announced.

In paragraph 35, the General Committee draws the attention of the General Assembly to paragraphs 14 and 15 of resolution 73/341, in which the Assembly stressed the need to limit the number of high-level events in the margins of the general debate and underlined the urgent need to preserve the primacy of the general debate. I would like to insist in particular on this point as we are preparing for the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly. It will be key to limit the number of high-level events held during the general debate of the seventy-fifth session to focus on that landmark anniversary.

In paragraph 36, the General Committee draws the attention of the Assembly to the fact that, in accordance with past practice, the Assembly holds a single debate on the items on its agenda, and that a specific mandate from the Assembly is needed for any additional debate. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of the information provided?

It was so decided.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



The President: In paragraph 43, the General Committee brings to the attention of the General Assembly information on the conduct of the meetings of the plenary, including on the order and the format of statements. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of the information provided?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 52, the General Committee brings to the attention of the Assembly information on sponsorship of draft resolutions and decisions. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of the information provided?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 53, the General Committee brings to the attention of the Assembly information on rights of reply to addresses made by Heads of State. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of the information provided?

It was so decided.

The President: I should also like to refer to the information contained in paragraph 74 concerning the timely submission of draft proposals for the review of their programme budget implications.

In paragraph 81, the General Committee draws the attention of the Assembly to the views expressed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the use of the phrase “within existing resources”, as well as to the Committee’s report, contained in document A/54/7, in which it emphasized the responsibility of the Secretariat to inform the General Assembly thoroughly and accurately about the sufficiency of resources to implement a new activity. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of the information provided?

It was so decided.

The President: I believe it would be beneficial to address all the remaining organizational matters concerning the General Assembly as a whole. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of all the information and to approve all the recommendations of the General Committee contained in section II of the report as a whole?

It was so decided.

The President: I now invite members to turn their attention to section III, concerning the adoption of the

agenda. The question of allocation of items is dealt with in section IV.

In section III, the General Committee takes note of the information contained in paragraphs 92 to 94. In paragraph 95, in connection with sub-item (d) of item 22 of the draft agenda, “Eradicating rural poverty to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading A. May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 96, in connection with item 38 of the draft agenda, “Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte”, the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading B, on the understanding that there would be no consideration of this item by the General Assembly. May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 97, in connection with item 60 of the draft agenda, “Question of the Malagasy islands of Glorieuses, Juan de Nova, Europa and Bassas da India”, the General Committee decided to recommend that consideration of this item be deferred to the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly and that the item be included in the provisional agenda of that session. May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 98, in connection with item 64 of the draft agenda, “The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine”, the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading B.

Two representatives have requested the floor in connection with the inclusion of this item. Before proceeding further, I should like to draw the attention of members to rule 23 of the rules of procedure, which reads as follows:

“Debate on the inclusion of an item in the agenda, when that item has been recommended for inclusion by the General Committee, shall be limited to three speakers in favour of, and three against, the inclusion. The President may limit the time to be allowed to speakers under this rule.”

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I have asked for the floor in order to make a statement on item 64 of the draft agenda for the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, “The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine”.

The very title of this item distorts reality and confuses people about the nature of the events that took place in Ukraine after the coup d'état in 2014. Depending on the immediate benefits, the Ukrainian authorities interchangeably characterize the armed repression of the population in the eastern areas of Ukraine as an anti-terrorist operation, a hybrid war or even an uncompromising battle to save Europe. It is clear that given the propagandist narrative, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for those authorities to have an honest dialogue and open communication with the people in Donetsk and Luhansk, who have refused to support a discriminatory policy of the new — or rather, the now former — regime aimed at undermining fundamental rights and political freedoms.

We wish to draw particular attention to the Ukrainian delegation's destructive approach to this matter, which undermines the only internationally recognized mechanism for resolving the crisis in Ukraine, namely, the set of measures to implement the Minsk agreements contained in Security Council resolution 2202 (2015). As members understand, that unanimously adopted document contains no reference to any temporarily occupied territories.

In that connection, I would like to make the following statement. This initiative is unacceptable to us, and we would like to disassociate ourselves from the consensus regarding the decision made at the previous session (see A/73/PV.3) to include this item in the agenda of the seventy-third session and the decision to include it in the agenda of the current session (decision 73/567). I would like to thank the 71 delegations that did not support the decision during the vote at the previous session, especially those that voted with the Russian Federation.

Mr. Al Arsan (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We refer to our statement at the previous session of the General Assembly (A/73/PV.107). We also disassociate ourselves from the consensus to include this item in the agenda of the seventy-fourth session.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 99, in connection with item 131 of the draft agenda, “The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”, the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading I.

Several delegations have asked to speak in connection with the inclusion of this item. Before proceeding further, I should like to draw the attention of members to rule 23 of the rules of procedure, which reads as follows:

“Debate on the inclusion of an item in the agenda, when that item has been recommended for inclusion by the General Committee, shall be limited to three speakers in favour of, and three against, the inclusion. The President may limit the time to be allowed to speakers under this rule.”

Mr. Al Arsan (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the important and sensitive presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. That reflects the confidence placed in your country and your personal and professional ability to lead the work of the Assembly. You can count on our support and cooperation in making the work of this session a success and in upholding the value of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, in addition to respecting the rules of procedure.

With regard to item 130 of the draft agenda, “The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”, my country's delegation wishes to express once again its rejectionist position, namely, that this item should not to be included in the agenda of the seventy-fourth session for the following reasons.

First, certain permanent delegations continue to insist on including this item on the agenda in the same exclusionary manner. Such attempts began two years ago and are ongoing. Of course, that exclusionary approach does not take into account the rules of procedure but seeks to manipulate them, even at the cost of undermining the good and established practices of the General Assembly ensuring consensus on the agenda of each of its sessions.

Secondly, the countries that have made this request ignore the fundamental and deep disputes between Member States over the concept of the responsibility to protect, in particular the most serious disputes over the concept's third pillar. All of us in this Hall, including the Secretariat, know that we have not been able thus far to establish genuine rules and limitations to prevent the concept from being misused, unilaterally and without a mandate from the United Nations, by the Governments of certain Member States. On several occasions, those Governments have waged military aggressions against other countries occupied their territory, thereby undermining their sovereignty and independence under the pretext of implementing the responsibility to protect.

Thirdly, my country's delegation, together with those of a considerable number of other Member States, remains unconvinced that the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the seventy-fourth session would serve the discussion concerning the concept of the responsibility to protect in a constructive, collective and free-will manner. The discussion of this concept through an informal and interactive dialogue was not given a real opportunity or enough time to overcome the differences regarding this controversial and serious concept.

Fourthly, paragraphs 138 and 139 of the outcome document of the 2005 World Summit did not adopt the concept of the responsibility to protect as a principle. Rather, they asserted basic and genuine principles of the Charter of the United Nations relating to the maintenance of international peace and security, saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war, having faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity of the human person, promoting social progress on an equal footing and better standards of life in larger freedom within the framework of respecting the sovereignty of States and non-intervention in their domestic affairs.

Here, I wish to draw the attention of Member States once again to the fact that the consensus-based text adopted at the 2005 World Summit, on the responsibility to protect, is different and does not coincide with the title of item 130 as contained in A/74/250. This demonstrates that there is no legal or realistic link between the wording of paragraphs 138 and 139 of the outcome document and the item before us, which has a different title.

Fifthly, all those present in this Hall are aware that when we discuss a controversial, sensitive and serious issue such as the responsibility to protect we are supposed to shoulder our maximum responsibility and assume a realistic political attitude based on world experience. To put it more clearly, I say that there are certain Governments that have exploited the concept of the responsibility to protect in the past and other Governments that use it today. There are also others that will continue to use the concept of responsibility to protect in the future as a pretext to implement their policies aimed at interfering and carrying out military aggressions while imposing unilateral coercive measures against certain peoples of the world.

I have the following question. As Member States, should we overlook those grave difference interpretations of the concept of the responsibility to protect, as well as its third pillar? Is it in our interest to let the United Nations shoulder the historic responsibility by illegally granting legitimacy for any military aggression of some countries against others for punishing the peoples of the world, economically and politically, by applying the controversial and serious concept of the responsibility to protect?

That is why we would like those States that have proposed the inclusion of the item on the agenda of the seventy-fourth session to acknowledge their responsibility for deepening the divisions that we are experiencing today and for letting this issue create divisions among the various Members of the United Nations. Those divisions are undermining the consensus of Member States on the agendas of each of the Assembly's sessions.

In conclusion, the Syrian Arab Republic underscores the need to continue discussing this issue as part of informal interactive dialogue. We also reject the idea of including item 130 on the agenda of the Assembly before we achieve consensus on the concept of the responsibility to protect, as well as its content, limitations and assurances. That would prevent the concept from being misused for political ends that go against the purposes and principles of the United Nations and its Charter.

Finally, we request a recorded vote on the inclusion of that controversial and non-consensual item on the agenda of the seventy-fourth General Assembly session, and we call on Member States to vote against its inclusion in the agenda.

Mr. Jensen (Denmark): At the outset, allow me, like others before me, to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over the General Assembly. We look forward to working under your stewardship.

Denmark, together with Guatemala, the Netherlands, Romania, Rwanda, Ukraine and Uruguay, requested at the seventy-third that the General Assembly include the item on the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity in the draft agenda of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly. On Monday, there was an objection to that request, and we voted on it (see A/73/PV.107). Just as in 2017 and 2018, a large majority of the General Assembly supported the inclusion of the agenda item. On Wednesday, I should just mention, the voice of the majority was heard by the General Committee. The Committee decided without a vote to recommend the inclusion of the item on the agenda of the seventy-fourth session.

Today, we urge the members of the Assembly to respect a decision that it has already made. We understand that the delegations have diverging views on the substance of the agenda item, but we also understand that it would be unprecedented for the Assembly to challenge the inclusion of an item when a vote on that very item has already taken place. Respect for decisions of the General Assembly, irrespective of one's own position, is the bedrock of the institution and a precondition for its ability to deliver results. We urge all delegations to support the inclusion of the agenda item.

Ms. Guardia González (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I join the delegations that have already taken the floor in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election. We wish you every success in your work and reaffirm that you have our support.

The delegation of Cuba takes this opportunity to remark on the request to include the item on the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity on the agenda of the seventy-fourth session. In that regard, Cuba reiterates its determination to fight against horrendous crimes that affect humankind.

At the same time, our delegation continues to believe that it is neither viable nor timely for the General Assembly to discuss the responsibility to protect on its formal agenda, due to the fact that this issue continues to give rise to serious concerns for many countries.

Consensus on its scope or implications — which would resolve diverging interpretations, guarantee its recognition and acceptance by Member States and grant legitimacy to the actions considered for its future implementation — has not even been reached.

The intention of the initial proponents of that issue was to discuss it for only one session; however, we have seen is automatically added to the preliminary agenda of items for the seventy-fourth session, and we question the transparency of that process. In addition, the objections of Member States were practically ignored on 16 September and the clear and manifest lack of consensus expressed by 13 countries was overlooked, again forcing a vote on the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the seventy-fourth session. However, once again the numbers did not add up, since there were 27 abstentions, 15 countries against and a large number of those present in the Hall who did not participate in the voting, clearly showing the lack of consensus.

We note once again that the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly will not guarantee or ensure alacrity in achieving consensus on the concept of the responsibility to protect. On the contrary, as has been seen in the debates over the past two years, it will highlight the differences among Member States in that regard.

Finally, we draw the attention of those present to the fact that the consensus reached in 2005 was on the responsibility to protect against genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and not their prevention, as is now proposed to be included within the very title of the item. That once again illustrates the lack of transparency and the opportunism of this process. Let us be serious and respect the hours that we spent negotiating among colleagues on this issue. In that context, we do not believe that it is relevant that the item be included on the agenda of the seventy-fourth session and will therefore vote against its inclusion.

Mr. Salovaara (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States.

On Monday, 16 September, the General Assembly already voted in favour of the rollover of agenda item 168, on the responsibility to protect (decision 73/572). That decision was affirmed by the General Committee on Wednesday, 18 September. Questioning a decision of the General Assembly is not only unprecedented, it is simply counterproductive. Diverging views are best addressed through dialogue. The very successful

debates on the responsibility to protect in the past two years show that there is a strong interest by all States members of the Assembly to further discuss this issue. There is no valid reason to impede this conversation from continuing.

For the same reasons, we voted in favour of the rollover on Monday. We will vote again today in favour of including the item on the agenda of the General Assembly, and we call on all Member States to do the same.

Mr. Simonoff (United States of America): We recall that the General Assembly voted overwhelmingly in favour of including the responsibility to protect on the provisional agenda of the seventy-fourth session at its meeting on the morning of 16 September (decision 73/572). We were pleased that, at its meeting yesterday morning, the General Committee returned to its practice of adopting the agenda by consensus, including this agenda item. Those who did not support the inclusion of the responsibility to protect registered their position by dissociating from the consensus. We had hoped that those who did not support the inclusion of that item on the agenda would today refrain from calling for a vote and that they would follow the example of the members of the General Committee.

We are therefore disappointed that a vote has been called with respect to the inclusion of this agenda item. We think that now is not the time to debate the substance of the responsibility to protect. That time will come when the debate on this item is scheduled later in this session. At that time, Member States will have ample opportunities to air their views regarding the responsibility to protect. We urge all Member States to vote in favour of including the responsibility to protect on the agenda of the seventy-fourth session.

Ms. Zabolotskaya (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Our discussion today, like that which took place on 16 September (see A/73/PV.107) and also in the General Committee, clearly demonstrates that there is no consensus within the General Assembly on the need to discuss this agenda item within the agenda of this session of the General Committee. Furthermore, an alternative was proposed — a consensus-based approach to discussing this issue. We proposed that we move to an informal dialogue in order to find a consensus.

Regrettably, those who support this agenda item for some reason chose to ignore the views of those

who proposed the consensus-based consideration. Unfortunately, that option for consideration was not even discussed. As far as we know, no one came to our delegation or other delegations that had proposed this alternative way to discuss matters. But for some reason they continue to try and impose this agenda item on us and for some reason it is thought that that may somehow help us to discuss this concept. In our view, that is not the case. It would be very interesting for us to know how those who are trying to organize this process intend to find a consensus on this issue if we cannot reach an agreement even on the procedural aspects.

Today it has been said here that we need to respect the decisions of the General Assembly and we fully agree with that. It is therefore very important to remember precisely what the General Assembly adopted in 2005. It did not at that time adopt the concept of the responsibility to protect. It adopted a part of the document (resolution 60/1) entitled “Responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”. Within that part, it was described how the concept was expected to be implemented.

We all know very well that the concept of the responsibility to protect is very controversial — I am referring to the separate concept and not to what is set out in the document of 2005, which speaks of the responsibility of States to protect their populations from certain crimes. In the agenda item being proposed today, for some reason we once again see the concept of the responsibility to protect. The agenda item is entitled the responsibility to protect and the prevention of certain crimes, which are then mentioned.

I think that those who are proposing this agenda item well recall that the title of the part of the 2005 outcome document was a matter of serious compromise. States agreed to that wording of the title and it was important to them. But for some reason it is simply being disregarded in this agenda item.

The Russian Federation is therefore very disappointed that the discussion has proceeded in this way, that the 2005 document is basically already being rewritten and that the proposal that we need to have a discussion in an informal format was for some reason also ignored.

Therefore, we of course do not support this way of considering within the General Assembly such important issues that refer to the sovereignty of

States, the use of force, assistance and protection from international crimes. We think that we need to find a different way to discuss these issues.

The President: A recorded vote has been requested on the recommendation of the General Committee to include the item entitled “The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity” on the agenda of the current session.

Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Seifi Pargou (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Islamic Republic of Iran reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the noble goals of the protection of civilians and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. As we have reiterated on previous occasions, the responsibility to protect (R2P) has, regrettably, failed the tests for objectivity and impartiality. So far, it has been guided by the politicized interests of certain States, rather than human dignity and human rights, and has deviated far from its alleged objectives and purposes.

Moreover, the lack of intergovernmental agreement about the scope of application and definition of that initiative has steadily increased uncertainties and the risk of biased interpretation and application of R2P. Valuable past experience suggests that informal interactive dialogue, as agreed in 2009, is a more appropriate way to address existing differences. The formal General Assembly discussion will only deepen existing differences and divisions among the Member States and will not be an appropriate way to reach an agreeable conceptual framework for the implementation of the responsibility to protect. Because of that and many other convincing reasons, my delegation will vote against the inclusion of R2P in the agenda of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Zhang Dianbin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The General Assembly has held many debates on whether to include the responsibility to protect in the agenda of the seventy-fourth session. There have been significant differences of opinion. Against that backdrop, Member States should address this issue through the channel of the General Assembly’s informal interactive dialogues, pursuant to the 2005 World Summit outcome document. Railroad this item into

the agenda of the current session will only entrench those differences and undermine trust. In no way will it be conducive to garnering consensus. In view of the above, China is opposed to the proposal to include this item in the agenda.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): As one of the sponsors of the relevant request to include this item in the agenda of the seventy-fourth session, Ukraine will certainly vote in favour, and we appeal to other delegations to do the same.

I would like to ask one clarification. I have heard all of the statements on this issue and, frankly, I have not heard a single formal request for a vote. Could I ask you, Sir, to clarify which particular delegation requested a vote on this item?

The President: It was the Syrian Arab Republic that requested a vote.

Mr. Moussa (Egypt): Like others before me, we congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency.

A few days ago (see A/73/PV.107), my delegation took the floor to reject the request to include an agenda item entitled “The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity” on the agenda of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly.

We take the floor once again to express our rejection of the inclusion of the item on the agenda of the seventy-fourth session. Time and time again, we have stated that we are not against and, on the contrary, are wholeheartedly committed to the noble goals enshrined in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the World Summit outcome document, adopted in September 2005 (resolution 60/1). Each individual State has the responsibility to protect (R2P) its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. That responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including their incitement, through appropriate and necessary means. However, that has to be undertaken in the proper channels and forums.

It is in that light that Egypt, in 2016 and during our presidency of the Security Council, along with a group of countries, drafted and successfully adopted resolution 2286 (2016), on the protection of health care in armed conflict, a milestone document that sent a strong and clear message from the international community — that

attacks targeting hospitals and medical workers were unacceptable and would not be tolerated.

Yet again, however, we are left perplexed and somewhat dismayed by the incessant persistence of some delegations to hastily push for an item to be included on the official agenda of the General Assembly that arouses much controversy and clearly does not garner the full support of the international community. We note that the debate happening now dispels any misconceptions or illusions that there is consensus on the notion of R2P or on how to move forward in that regard.

We once again reiterate that the notion of R2P still contains a number of political and legal gaps that, left unattended, would do more harm than good with regard to its universal acceptance. Such gaps need first to be addressed and a consensus reached on the conceptual framework of the notion before any further steps are taken to mainstream the notion of R2P across the United Nations system.

Mr. Chekeche (Zimbabwe): I too would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to your office.

Zimbabwe joins other Member States in raising concerns about the premature adoption of the item on the responsibility to protect (R2P) before there is common understanding and support among all Member States on the modalities of its implementation. Currently, there are obvious significant differences in the interpretation of the 2005 World Summit outcome document; hence, our call for continued dialogue to narrow the existing gaps.

It is our understanding that the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity is the primary responsibility of individual Member States and not a pretext for interference in the internal affairs of Member States. The role of the international community must always be confined to focusing on modalities for the peaceful settlement of disputes without resorting to military intervention.

Existing ambiguities in the transparent use of R2P must be cleared first in order to garner consensus on its legitimate application. We support the call for continued dialogue on R2P to bridge existing conceptual gaps among Member States before moving forward on R2P as part of the United Nations preventive approach to atrocity crimes.

Mr. Kim In Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Let me join other delegations in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election.

As far as the responsibility to protect (R2P) is concerned, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has made its position clear in previous sessions, namely, that the responsibility to protect people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity is the sovereign right of the State. The concept of R2P is problematic because it contradicts the Charter of the United Nations and international law in various ways, and, further, Member States have divergent views about it. The approach we prefer is to continue informal negotiations to reach consensus instead of discussing formally it in the General Assembly.

The R2P concept of protecting civilians has been abused by some countries, through collective armed invasions against sovereign developing countries, interference in the internal affairs of other countries and efforts aimed at provoking regime change. That is why the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea wishes to reiterate its opposition to the inclusion of the dangerous concept of the responsibility to protect on the formal agenda of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Scott-Kemmis (Australia): Over the past two years, the General Assembly has held two formal debates on the responsibility to protect. The level of engagement in these debates has been significant. These debates have provided an opportunity to share perspectives and advance common understanding through dialogue, one of the very purposes for which this institution was established. At this moment, we see less value in the General Assembly speaking less about how we can work collectively to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. For these reasons, we see considerable merit in continuing the dialogue and including this item on the agenda of seventy-fourth session.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The General Assembly will now take a decision on the recommendation by the General Committee for the inclusion of item 131, "The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity", in the agenda of the current session.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, India, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kuwait, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Senegal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay

Against:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Eritrea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Myanmar, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Angola, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Libya, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Serbia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Togo, Viet Nam

The recommendation contained in paragraph 99 of the report that item 131 be included in the agenda of the current session was approved by 79 votes to 13, with 17 abstentions.

[Subsequently, the delegation of Saudi Arabia informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that

explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): I take the floor to make an explanation of vote on the inclusion of the agenda item on the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Singapore abstained in the voting. In previous years, Singapore had voted in support of the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly. This year, however, we have decided to change our position to "abstain" because we are not persuaded that the inclusion of this item on the General Assembly's agenda will lead to a constructive and productive dialogue.

The concept of responsibility to protect clearly continues to divide Member States. The discussion on Monday in the General Assembly (see A/73/PV.107), as well as today's vote, clearly indicate that the divisions are deep. In such context, we think that it is important to build trust and confidence through an informal dialogue in order to gradually build some common understanding.

Two years ago, at the start of the seventy-second session of the Assembly, when the issue of the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly first arose, the proponents then said and provided clear assurances that their request for inclusion of the item was a one-off — that this item would be included only in the agenda of the seventy-second session. We were therefore very surprised that this agenda item was introduced again at the seventy-third session and now will appear on the agenda of the seventy-fourth session.

Singapore has always attached importance to dialogue and discussion. However, in our view, a formal debate is not always the best way to build trust and confidence. We believe that an informal dialogue can be more helpful in building trust and understanding and in allowing for a candid exchange of views on this issue. We therefore regret that this agenda item has become an annual ritual that only serves to deepen divisions in the General Assembly, in spite of earlier assurances provided that the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly would only occur one time, which is clearly not the case anymore.

Let me conclude with a final point. Any dialogue, formal or informal, must be based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and on the principles of

international law. This dialogue must also be conducted on the basis of mutual respect and understanding and with sensitivity to the differences of views among Member States. In particular, we should avoid going in the direction of country-specific resolutions, as such an approach will not help to build confidence or consensus.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

We shall now proceed with the next part of the item on our agenda.

Turning to paragraph 100, in connection with item 132 of the draft agenda, “Seventy-fifth anniversary of the end of the Second World War”, the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading I.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 101, in connection with item 172 of the draft agenda, “Observer status for the Group of Seven Plus in the General Assembly”, the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading I.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 102, in connection with item 173 of the draft agenda, “Observer status for the International Organization of Employers in the General Assembly”, the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading I. May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 103, in connection with item 174 of the draft agenda, “Observer status for the International Trade Union Confederation in the General Assembly”, the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading I. May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 104, in connection with item 175 of the draft agenda, “Observer status for the Boao Forum for Asia in the General Assembly”, the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion

under heading I. May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the agenda recommended by the General Committee in paragraph 105 of its report for adoption by the General Assembly, taking into account the decisions just adopted with respect to the draft agenda. Bearing in mind that the agenda is organized under nine headings, we shall consider the inclusion of items under each heading as a whole.

I should like to remind members once again that, at present, we are not discussing the substance of any item.

Items 1 and 2 have already been dealt with. We shall now turn to items 3 to 8. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to include these item in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the inclusion of the items listed under heading A, “Promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and recent United Nations conferences”. May I take it that the items listed under heading A are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to heading B, “Maintenance of international peace and security”. May I take it that the items listed under heading B are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Next, we turn to heading C, “Development of Africa”. May I take it that the items listed under heading C are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Now we come to heading D, “Promotion of human rights”. May I take it that the items listed under heading D are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Heading E is entitled “Effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts”. May I take it that the items listed under heading E are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Next, we turn to heading F, “Promotion of justice and international law”. May I take it that the items listed under heading F are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Now we turn to heading G, “Disarmament”. May I take it that the items listed under heading G are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Heading H is entitled “Drug control, crime prevention and combating international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations”. May I take it that the items listed under heading H are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Lastly, we turn to heading I, “Organizational, administrative and other matters”. May I take it that the items listed under heading I are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to section IV of the report of the General Committee, on allocation of items. The General Committee took note of the information contained in paragraphs 106 to 108. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of the information contained in paragraph 108 concerning the granting of observer status?

It was so decided.

The President: We shall now turn to the recommendations contained in paragraphs 110 to 114. We shall take up the recommendations paragraph by paragraph.

Before we proceed, may I remind members that the item numbers cited here refer to the agenda in paragraph 105 of the report of the General Committee before us.

We shall now turn to paragraphs 110 (a) to (m), relating to a number of plenary items. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of all the information of which the General Committee took note and approve all the recommendations of the General Committee contained in paragraphs 110 (a) to (m)?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to paragraph 111, relating to item 98, “General and complete disarmament”. May I take it that the General Assembly approves the recommendation contained in paragraph 111?

It was so decided.

The President: We now turn to paragraph 112, relating to sub-item (d) of agenda item 22, “Eradicating rural poverty to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. May I take it that the General Assembly approves the recommendation contained in paragraph 112?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to paragraphs 113 (a) and (b), relating to the Fifth Committee. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of all the information of which the General Committee took note and approve all the recommendations of the General Committee contained in paragraphs 113 (a) and (b)?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to paragraphs 114 (a) to (d), relating to the Sixth Committee. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to approve all the recommendations of the General Committee contained in paragraphs 114 (a) to (d)?

It was so decided.

The President: We shall now turn to paragraph 115 of the report of the General Committee on the allocation of items to the plenary and to each Main Committee. We turn first to the list of items recommended by the General Committee for consideration directly in plenary meeting under all the relevant headings.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I consider that the General Assembly approves the allocation of the items listed for consideration in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: We come next to the list of items that the General Committee has recommended for allocation to the First Committee under all the relevant headings.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of these items for consideration by the First Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the list of items that the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) under all the relevant headings. Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I consider that the General Assembly approves the allocation of these items for consideration by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)?

It was so decided.

The President: We come now to the list of items that the General Committee has recommended for allocation to the Second Committee under all the relevant headings. Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I consider that the General Assembly approves the allocation of these items for consideration by the Second Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the list of items which the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Third Committee under all the relevant headings. Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of these items for consideration by the Third Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: Next, we come to the list of items which the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Fifth Committee under all the relevant headings. Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of these items for consideration by the Fifth Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: Lastly, we come to the list of items which the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Sixth Committee under all the relevant headings. Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of these items for consideration by the Sixth Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of the first report of the General Committee. I wish to thank all the Members of the Assembly for their cooperation.

I would now like to draw the attention of representatives to a matter concerning the participation of the Holy See, in its capacity as an observer State, in the sessions and work of the General Assembly.

In accordance with resolution 58/314 of 1 July 2004, and the note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/58/871, the Holy See, in its capacity as an observer State, will participate in the work of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly with no further need for a precursory explanation prior to any intervention.

I would also like to draw the attention of representatives to a matter concerning the participation of the State of Palestine, in its capacity as an observer State, in the sessions and work of the General Assembly.

In accordance with resolutions 3237 (XXIX), of 22 November 1974, 43/177, of 15 December 1988, 52/250, of 7 July 1998, 67/19, of 29 November 2012, and 73/5 of 16 October 2018, and the note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/52/1002, the State of Palestine, in its capacity as an observer State, will participate in the work of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly with no further need for a precursory explanation prior to any intervention.

In addition, I would like to draw the attention of representatives to a matter concerning the participation of the European Union, in its capacity as observer, in the sessions and work of the General Assembly.

In accordance with resolution 65/276, of 3 May 2011, and the note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/65/856, representatives of the European Union will participate in the work of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly with no further need for a precursory explanation prior to any intervention.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.