



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9442nd meeting

Wednesday, 18 October 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. França Danese	(Brazil)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Hoxha
	China	Mr. Zhang Jun
	Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon	Mr. Biang
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	Japan	Mr. Ishikane
	Malta	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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

Members of the Council have before them document S/2023/773, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Brazil.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it.

The representative of the Russian Federation has submitted amendments (S/2023/775 and S/2023/776) to the text of the draft resolution.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): During consultations on 16 October, many Security Council members tried to dissuade us from calling for a vote on our depoliticized humanitarian draft resolution. We were asked to wait 24 hours so that members could submit a “consensus” draft resolution. We did not agree with that. And we were right, because in the end, after almost two days, today’s voting will be on a draft resolution that is only slightly, but very questionably, changed and was not even discussed with Council members. We regret that in the end the Council wasted another precious 36 hours, during which time the death toll increased: the strike on the hospital in Gaza yesterday evening killed hundreds of civilians. Against that background, inaction by the Security Council looks appalling. We warned colleagues yesterday that we simply could not waste any time.

I will speak frankly, since the time for diplomatic metaphors has obviously long passed. Everyone who did not support our humanitarian draft resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire (S/2023/772) must understand that they bear some of the responsibility for what happened in Gaza. Brazil’s draft resolution (S/2023/773), unfortunately, will not help to avert a repetition of that tragedy. It includes no direct call for a ceasefire — which is the most important element for de-escalating the situation on the ground. It is very important wording, which has been replaced by

a call for humanitarian pauses, which are also limited solely to ensuring unhindered humanitarian access for United Nations agencies. But that is not the same thing. Humanitarian pauses will not help stop the bloodshed. Only a ceasefire can do that.

In addition, the draft resolution still contains a number of political elements that, while condemning one side, do not send the proper incentive signals to the other regarding the absolute inadmissibility of deadly attacks on civilians and civilian objects in the Gaza Strip. The importance of that now, I think, is absolutely crystal clear to everyone.

We have therefore proposed two amendments to address those shortcomings. The first (S/2023/775) introduces a new operative paragraph unequivocally condemning indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population and civilian objects in the Gaza Strip, including yesterday’s missile attack on the Al Ahli Hospital, as well as strongly condemning the blockade. The second amendment (S/2023/776) adds a new paragraph to the operative part of the draft resolution, calling for an immediate, sustainable and respected humanitarian ceasefire.

If the amendments we have proposed are not included in the text of the draft resolution, it would not contribute to correcting the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza. On the contrary, it would only deepen the divisions among members of the Security Council and polarize the positions of members of the international community. We urge the members of the Council to vote in favour of the amendments proposed by Russia.

The President: Members of the Council have before them proposed amendments, submitted by the Russian Federation, to the text of the draft resolution contained in document S/2023/773, submitted by Brazil.

Rule 36 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure states the following:

“If two or more amendments to a motion or draft resolution are proposed, the President shall rule on the order in which they are to be voted upon. Ordinarily, the Security Council shall first vote on the amendment furthest removed in substance from the original proposal and then on the amendment next furthest removed until all amendments have been put to the vote, but when an amendment adds to or deletes from the text of a motion or draft resolution, that amendment shall be voted on first.”

Accordingly, I intend to put the proposed amendments to the vote first.

I shall now put to the vote the proposed amendment to be inserted after operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution. The amendment is contained in document S/2023/775.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Brazil, China, Gabon, Mozambique, Russian Federation, United Arab Emirates

Against:

United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Ecuador, France, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The President: The amendment received 6 votes in favour, 1 against and 8 abstentions. The proposed amendment has not been adopted, having failed to obtain the required number of votes.

I shall now put to the vote the proposed amendment to be inserted before operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution. The amendment is contained in document S/2023/776.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Brazil, China, Gabon, Mozambique, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates

Against:

United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Ecuador, France, Ghana, Japan, Malta, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The President: The amendment received 7 votes in favour, 1 against and 7 abstentions. The proposed amendment has not been adopted, having failed to obtain the required number of votes.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The voting on the amendment contained in document S/2023/776, to be inserted before operative

paragraph 1 of draft resolution S/2023/773, on an immediate ceasefire, and on the amendment contained in S/2023/775, to be inserted after operative paragraph 2 of draft resolution S/2023/773, on a condemnation of the attacks against civilians, which were proposed by Russia, has made everything crystal clear. The delegations that either abstained in the voting or voted against those amendments were essentially against the cessation of the bloodshed in the Middle East. There can be no other explanation. Of course, colleagues in this Chamber will use formal excuses, such as claiming that the language of the amendments were not balanced, but those will all sound pathetic — it is as simple as that.

Those colleagues have made their choice, and they will have to bear responsibility for that choice before the citizens of their countries, as well as of the countries in the region and the millions of civilians who are living under that deadly threat.

The President: It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution contained in document S/2023/773, submitted by Brazil.

I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Albania, Brazil, China, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates

Against:

United States of America

Abstaining:

Russian Federation, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The President: The draft resolution received 12 votes in favour, 1 against and 2 abstentions. The draft resolution has not been adopted, owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Council.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Brazil.

At last Friday's closed consultations, Council members asked for Brazil's leadership in its capacity as President of the Council for the month of October to facilitate a Council response to the escalating crisis in Israel and Palestine, in particular its humanitarian aspects. We heeded the call with a sense of urgency and responsibility. In our view, the Council had to take action

and do so very quickly. Council paralysis in the face of a humanitarian catastrophe is not in the interest of the international community.

Therefore, throughout the past weekend and the following days, we worked very hard through extensive and collaborative engagement with Council members to help build a unified position. While making a good faith effort to accommodate different — sometimes opposing — positions, our focus was and remains on the critical humanitarian situation on the ground. Political realism guided us, but our sight was always set on the humanitarian imperative. Exactly as with other very sensitive items on the Council's agenda in which Brazil had a special role to play, international humanitarian law and human rights law provided a clear framework for action.

Our proposed draft resolution (S/2023/773) unequivocally condemned all forms of violence against civilians, including the heinous acts of terrorism by Hamas and the taking of hostages. It called for their immediate and unconditional release. It also called on all parties to strictly abide by their international legal obligations, in particular those relating to the protection of civilians, civilian infrastructure and humanitarian personnel. The draft resolution also stressed the urgent need for humanitarian access to civilians. The text incorporated urgent and multiple calls by the United Nations and many other actors for humanitarian pauses to allow for the delivery of aid and the voluntary safe passage of civilians. It encouraged the establishment of humanitarian corridors and other mechanisms to facilitate the smooth delivery of aid. The draft further reflected the ethical necessity to provide civilians in Gaza with electricity, water, fuel, food and medical supplies and the necessity to be protected from forced relocation when the prevailing conditions on the ground do not ensure a safe and secure displacement. Thus, faced with heinous terrorist acts against Israeli civilians, the forceful reaction to such acts and an ever-growing humanitarian disaster imposed on Gaza, the Council response we proposed was robust and balanced.

We are grateful to all Council members who have engaged with us since Friday and demonstrated a sincere and practical commitment to multilateralism.

Very sadly, the Council was yet again unable to adopt a resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Again, silence and inaction prevailed in no one's true long-term interest.

While we deeply regret that collective action is made impossible in the Security Council, we do hope that efforts by other actors will yield positive results. They must be prompt, effective and substantial. Hundreds of thousands of civilians in Gaza cannot wait any longer. Actually, they have waited for far too long to no avail.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have just witnessed yet another demonstration of the hypocrisy and double standards of our American colleagues. While not opposing in principle the idea of adopting a humanitarian resolution in the Security Council, they were not genuinely interested in it and simply hoped to put enough pressure on Council members to have the draft resolution collapse without needing to veto it. As their attempt failed, they had to take their masks off before us today.

I am not going to waste Council members' time by belabouring this point. I think what has happened is crystal clear. However, I would like to refer to what the head of Lockheed Martin, James Taiclet, said yesterday when speaking with the American media.

“It makes no sense to restrain Israel from military action. What is the point? The point is that we need to further develop our military industrial complex, which should account for more than 2 per cent of our gross domestic product. There are conflicts that need to be resolved with weapons, and we are prepared to provide those weapons.”

We have no comment. That is the very essence of the United States policy — from the Middle East region to Ukraine and the Asia-Pacific region. We hope that, after today's vote, our international partners will have no illusions about that.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): As we meet, President Biden is in the region. His trip is a clear demonstration of the fact that the United States is actively engaging at the highest levels to secure the release of hostages, to prevent the conflict from spreading, to stress the need to protect civilian lives, to address the humanitarian crisis facing Palestinians in Gaza and to demonstrate to the Israeli people that the United States stands with them in their time of sorrow and need.

We are on the ground doing the hard work of diplomacy. While we recognize Brazil's desire to move forward draft resolution S/2023/773, we believe we need to let that diplomacy play out, especially when Secretary-General Guterres, President Biden, Secretary Blinken and regional actors are engaged in intensive dialogue on the very issues we are deliberating on today.

Yes, resolutions are important, and yes, the Council must speak out. But the actions we take must be informed by the facts on the ground and support direct diplomacy efforts that can save lives. The Council needs to get this right.

The United States is disappointed that this draft resolution made no mention of Israel's right of self-defence. Like every nation in the world, Israel has the inherent right of self-defence, as reflected in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. Following previous terrorist attacks by groups such as Al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, the Council reaffirmed that right. This text should have done the same. Though we could not support this draft resolution, we will continue to work closely with all Council members on this pressing issue, just as we will continue to reiterate the need to protect civilians, including members of the media, humanitarian workers and United Nations officials.

When I talk about the protection of civilians, I mean all civilians. The United States is horrified and saddened by yesterday's explosion at the Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza. We mourn this tragic loss of life. On the humanitarian front, we are working with Israel, its neighbours, the United Nations and other partners to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. It is critical that food, medicine, water and fuel begin flowing into Gaza as soon as possible. Families, the elderly and children are in dire need.

Let us be clear. Hamas's own actions have brought on this severe humanitarian crisis. Hamas has caused so much needless suffering, death and destruction. Every Member State should condemn Hamas's terrorism and cruelty and every Member State should call on Hamas to cease its endless barrage of rockets against Israel. That is not complicated, and it is not controversial. It is the bare minimum.

At this difficult moment, let us all call for the protection of civilians and unequivocally condemn Hamas. Let us all affirm Israel's right of self-defence and support the urgent diplomatic efforts under way. Let us stand with the United Nations and other partners as they work to

alleviate the humanitarian crisis facing Palestinians in Gaza. And let us all support equal measures of justice and freedom for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): Malta voted in favour of draft resolution S/2023/773, submitted by Brazil. Malta has also abstained on the two amendments proposed by the Russian Federation, contained in documents S/2023/775 and S/2023/776. Although we have no issue with the substance, we saw no reason to alter a well-crafted resolution that rests on a delicate balance and that sought Council unity on this critical matter. We deeply regret that the draft resolution was not adopted and remain gravely concerned about the highly volatile situation in Israel and Gaza. Notwithstanding that decision, the Council must critically remain seized with the matter and strive to work towards constructive steps that prioritize the protection of civilians and prevent any potential regional conflagration.

Within that context, Malta unequivocally condemns in the strongest possible terms the barbaric terrorist acts perpetrated by Hamas on Israeli soil and against the people of Israel. Malta emphasizes that Israel has the right to self-defence in the face of such violence and indiscriminate attacks. It has the right and obligation to protect its territory and its people in line with humanitarian and international law and the principles of distinction and proportionality. We also reiterate our call on Hamas to unconditionally and safely release the hostages immediately.

We deeply regret that the casualties of this war have already included numerous medical, humanitarian and United Nations staff. Hundreds were killed in yesterday's horrific strike on the Al Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza, which was sheltering thousands of displaced. Such actions are deplorable. They are a blunt breach of international law, which categorically prohibits endangering civilians, medical staff and humanitarian establishments.

This is the inevitable result of the military operations that are being conducted in Gaza, one of the most densely populated places on Earth. Decisions to cut off electricity, water supply and refuse supplies of aid and fuel are also deeply concerning and are leading to catastrophic results. The evacuation order, which displaced over 1 million people to south Gaza, has had serious humanitarian consequences. Such decisions are inconsistent with international humanitarian law and must be rescinded. Malta also stresses the crucial importance that there be rapid and unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza

and urges the immediate establishment of humanitarian corridors in that regard.

At this juncture, the importance of preventing a regional spillover is critical. It is therefore imperative for all parties to exercise maximum restraint and fully comply with the norms of international law. Our efforts, moving forward, must be steadfast in aligning with a just and comprehensive resolution of the Middle East conflict.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The night before last, I already gave a comprehensive account of China's views on the current situation in Palestine and Israel. In the upcoming emergency meeting, I shall elaborate on China's position.

I will now focus on China's position on today's vote and the fact that draft resolution S/2023/773 failed to be adopted. We are shocked and disappointed.

The night before last, Russian draft resolution S/2023/772 focused on the humanitarian situation in the conflict between Palestine and Israel, and called for an immediate ceasefire and the protection of civilians. That draft resolution received a great deal of support and sponsorship from Arab countries. However, some countries chose to cast a negative vote. The reason given then was that they intended, rather, to base their positions on the draft resolution submitted by Brazil so as to have more time to deliberate. Brazil and other colleagues agreed to that request by postponing the voting for another 24 hours, which was followed by a further delay, until now. Over the past 40 hours, those countries have neither commented on nor expressed opposition to the Brazilian draft resolution. That led us to hope that today they would vote in favour of the draft resolution and the Council would be able to adopt the resolution.

However, the final result of the vote is nothing short of unbelievable. China also believes that the Brazilian draft resolution still has room for improvement. It should send a strong message and call for a ceasefire and the protection of civilians so as to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe.

China has therefore proposed amendments intended to improve the draft resolution, while at the same time agreeing with the Russian amendment. We are very disappointed that it failed to be adopted. Nevertheless, in view of the rapidly deteriorating situation in Gaza and the air strike on the hospital, among other actions, yesterday, which resulted in hundreds of civilian casualties, the Council therefore must take immediate measures. China condemns in the strongest terms any air strike against

hospitals, and we urge Israel to effectively adhere to its the obligations under international humanitarian law. We call for an immediate ceasefire and the protection of civilians to prevent a greater humanitarian catastrophe.

The draft resolution submitted by Brazil reflects the general view of the international community as to the initial steps that the Council should take to achieve a ceasefire. And, given the current circumstances, it might be the only possible draft resolution on which the Council can reach a consensus. Certain countries are stating orally that the Council should take appropriate action. However, their votes on the text of the draft resolution raise doubts regarding their willingness to enable the Council to take meaningful action and to find a solution to the problem.

In the final analysis, Council members should not sit idly by. The current situation in Gaza is escalating. An increasing number of civilians are paying the price with their lives and bearing the brunt of the conflict. Therefore, concerning the issue of a ceasefire, the cessation of hostilities, the protection of civilians and the prevention of a greater humanitarian catastrophe, the Council must effectively shoulder its responsibility and play its due role.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): Mozambique would like to commend Brazil and your presidency, Sir, for the excellent leadership in conducting this work, which is thorny, but important. We also thank you for providing the Security Council with a very valuable text.

We voted in favour of the draft resolution (S/2023/773). We deeply regret that it could not be adopted, owing to the exercise of the veto. In voting in favour of the draft resolution, Mozambique would like to express its deep concern about the outbreak and escalation of violence, the deterioration of the situation in Gaza and the consequent unfolding humanitarian crisis. Moreover, we are deeply concerned about the human lives being lost on a daily basis since the conflict erupted. The civilian population, mainly children, women and the elderly, are suffering the most from the atrocities and the grave effects of the war.

In supporting the draft resolution, Mozambique associates itself with the collective efforts of the Council aimed at ensuring the protection of civilians and respect for international human rights law, international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions, as applied to the conflict both in Gaza and in Israel. It is our strong call that humanitarian aid must reach the populations in need in Gaza. That includes the provision of essential goods and services and medical supplies.

We are conscious of the fact that, ultimately, humanitarian problems need political solutions. That belief reflects our own experience, which originates in our protracted struggle against colonialism, racism and apartheid in the Southern African region. In that context, we urge all parties to immediately stop attacks, refrain from further violence and engage in constructive dialogue. Mozambique firmly believes that Israel and Palestine can resolve their differences only through dialogue. We hold the view that peace is always possible if the conflicting parties are genuinely willing to follow the path of justice and tolerance. We would therefore like to reiterate our appeal to members of the Council to redouble our efforts towards a sustainable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We believe that the Palestinian people and the Israeli people have an inalienable right to statehood. They can live together, side by side, in peace and security, as good neighbours. As a matter of fact, the Charter of the United Nations compels the parties and indeed the entire international community to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): Let me begin by thanking your presidency, Sir, and all delegations for their efforts to produce a consensual draft resolution that could have helped support the efforts of the Security Council to de-escalate the growing tensions and respond to the tragic situation that we are all witnessing in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel. We deeply regret that the draft resolution (S/2023/773) could not be adopted. For Ghana, we have always held that, to the extent possible, the Council should speak as one voice on this important dispute, the fault lines of which reach many distant parts of the world. We have therefore, from the very beginning, given priority to the efforts, entrusted to the presidency, to lead all of us in that direction. It was also in that regard that we voted in favour of the Brazilian draft resolution but deemed it important to abstain in the voting on the draft resolution (S/2023/772) proposed on Monday night (see S/PV.9439) and the draft amendments to today's draft resolution (S/2023/775 and S/2023/776), to preserve the broadest possible agreement that was found to guide us in a common direction.

Despite the highly sensitive nature of the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the differences in approaches that we may have in resolving it, what should be paramount is our historic responsibility as a Council to deliver the two-State solution and preserve the lives of the two nations whose destinies are bound by history and a common and shared area. The Council's inability

to act on its responsibility today, however, should not break our resolve. We believe that a united Council voice and action on the matter is still required and critical to stabilizing the situation and assisting the parties to enter into dialogue, which is the only viable path to durable peace. We should therefore continue to ask the parties to de-escalate, seek consensus to support mediation efforts and knock on the doors of all those who can have a moderating influence on the parties to open up the space for dialogue.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): Japan voted in favour of the draft resolution (S/2023/773), because it can support its main ideas, bearing in mind various perspectives, including the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Japan has unequivocally condemned the terror attacks by Hamas and others and called for the immediate release of those who were kidnapped. We feel enormous indignation at the tremendous damage and harm done to innocent civilians by the attack on a hospital in Gaza City on 17 October.

At the same time, we would like to point out that Japan had asked to delay the vote on the draft resolution proposed by Brazil on the understanding that various countries, including the United States, have continued to make diplomatic efforts on the ground to improve the situation as soon as possible. Japan greatly regrets that the draft resolution was nonetheless put to a vote today. Japan has consistently and strongly supported and put its faith in diplomatic efforts by President Biden of the United States and leaders of other relevant countries. All of us — and especially those who have referred to hypocrisy — should think twice about whether we are really being faithful to the principles of human rights and doing enough to make a difference on the ground where improving the humanitarian situation is concerned. Action is needed. Japan will continue to work with other countries to ensure the safety of civilians and de-escalate the situation as quickly as possible.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Since 7 October, Switzerland has strongly condemned the acts of terror, indiscriminate attacks and hostage-taking perpetrated by Hamas against the Israeli population. We deplore the deaths of thousands of civilians, including hundreds of children, in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly Gaza. Switzerland joins the Secretary-General in unequivocally condemning the strikes, particularly the one that according to the United Nations caused hundreds of deaths and dozens of injuries yesterday at the Al Ahli Anglican-Episcopal Hospital. We express our sincere condolences to the families of the victims and to the injured.

We are deeply concerned about the large-scale humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the tragic situation facing the civilian population. Almost a million people are displaced. There is an urgent need to allow humanitarian aid to enter Gaza, with water, electricity and medical supplies running out.

The day before yesterday (see S/PV.9439), all of us around this table said that the situation in the Middle East requires united and urgent action by the Council. De-escalation, the protection of civilians, humane treatment of all hostages — whose immediate release Switzerland calls for — and rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access are top priorities. The draft resolution presented by Brazil (S/2023/773) responded to those priorities and was aimed at achieving a common understanding within the Council, which is why Switzerland voted in favour of it and why we deeply regret that it was not adopted today. I would like to once again thank your delegation, Mr. President, for its sustained commitment. It is unfortunate that we have not yet been able to reach consensus on a product that demonstrates our unity in the face of the situation.

Regardless of whether a draft resolution is adopted, all parties must respect international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, as well as human rights. International humanitarian law takes into account legitimate security and military necessity, and all of those rules must therefore be respected without exception.

Switzerland has made every effort to contribute to the search for consensus on a Council decision in this urgent situation. In that same spirit, we remain willing to support any new initiative that could lead to action by the Council.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): The Council finds its credibility being put to the test this morning in the face of the scale of the deadly violence in Israel and Gaza and the extreme gravity of the crisis in the Middle East, whose shockwaves threaten peace and security throughout the region and beyond. As the Security Council, our mandate is to stop wars — if not prevent them — and to alleviate the human suffering resulting from such crises.

This morning the Security Council has failed to live up to its mandate. The rhetoric around this table has been of no help or recourse to civilians in Gaza, who are being crushed beneath indiscriminate missile and rocket strikes and deprived of any means of survival. Once again, all things political and geopolitical have paralysed the

Council's capacity for action. The Council has offered no reaction to the horror and the cries of distress from the civilian population in the face of one of the most serious crises in the Middle East. We are watching helplessly as the tolls of death and destruction rise. The Council has provided no coherent response that gives a glimmer of hope to the children, women, hostages and people of the world who scrutinize our deliberations for their survival and safety.

My country voted in favour of the draft resolution submitted by the Brazilian presidency (S/2023/773), as well as the two proposed amendments (S/2023/775 and S/2023/776), because it is crucial and urgent to act, after our firm condemnation of the barbaric attacks on Israel on 7 October and our recognition of Israel's right to self-defence while respecting the principle of proportionality and distinction between combatants and civilians. It is our firm belief that given the magnitude of this deadly violence — which in just a few days has caused thousands of deaths and immeasurable humanitarian distress — we need to call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and for opening humanitarian corridors to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population. Our position has been clear since the Council's first meeting following the 7 October attack. The taking of hostages is unacceptable, unjustifiable and indefensible, and we reiterate that they must be released without conditions or blackmail.

We regret that the Council was unable to transcend its divisions and fragmentation. We will certainly have to demonstrate greater responsibility in finding a solution to the crisis in the Middle East, which is so chronic that it puts our credibility in question and damages our reputation. For Gabon, a two-State solution remains the only viable alternative. We can and must achieve it through good-faith diplomacy and negotiations and by overcoming the fears and vested interests that distance us from our collective responsibility to maintain peace and security in the region and beyond.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): Let me start by thanking you, Mr. President, for your efforts in good faith to negotiate a draft resolution (S/2023/773). The draft resolution on which we have just voted rightly condemns the appalling Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel on 7 October. It also makes clear that all actions in this situation must be taken in line with international humanitarian law. It stresses the importance of ensuring humanitarian access and the protection of civilians and emphasizes the Council's shared priority of preventing a regional escalation of the conflict.

While we welcome and support the draft resolution's attempts to lay out the Council's view on those critical points, it needed to be clearer on Israel's inherent right to self-defence, in line with the Charter of the United Nations, after Hamas attacks killed more than 1,400 people and took almost 200 more hostage. The draft resolution also ignored the fact that Hamas is using innocent Palestinian civilian as human shields. It has embedded itself in civilian communities and made the Palestinian people its victims, too. For those reasons the United Kingdom abstained in the vote on the draft resolution.

My Prime Minister has been clear that the United Kingdom stands with Israel in the face of those atrocities. We support Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas, take back the hostages, deter further incursions and strengthen its security for the long term. In doing so, we will continue to call on Israel to take all feasible precautions to avoid harming Palestinian civilians and to act in line with international humanitarian law. We will continue to work closely with Israel and our partners in the region to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, to ensure that civilians are protected and have access to food, water, medicine and shelter and to work towards the peace and stability promised by the two-State solution.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We voted in favour of the draft resolution proposed by the Brazilian presidency (S/2023/773), as did many other members of the Security Council. It was the result of a constructive and collective negotiating process that included all Security Council members, and we are convinced that collective work and good-faith negotiations are indispensable for effective multilateralism. They constitute the best pathway forward to fulfil the responsibilities placed upon us. We are convinced that the Council cannot continue to be silent in the face of events that are clearly a threat to international peace and security and that are already having grave humanitarian consequences. The Brazilian presidency's draft resolution includes elements that are necessary in the face of a situation that is worsening by the minute. The credibility of the Council depends on our decisions at times like this. Ecuador abstained with regard to the amendments (S/2023/775 and S/2023/776), since the aspects therein were covered in the draft resolution. We regret the fact that once again the Council was unable to adopt a draft resolution due to the use of the veto. However, our efforts do not end here. We will do everything within our grasp to ensure that the Council can rapidly reach a decision and take action with regard to this conflict.

On 24 September 1973, Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Ambassador Antonio Lucio Paredes spoke before the General Assembly and said:

“it is equally necessary that the activities of the great Powers, that in one way or another support the parties to the conflict in the Middle East, must be directed to finding solutions for the establishment of constructive peace and not stand in the way of possible formulas of agreement and understanding. The conflict in the Middle East, because of its explosive nature, obliges the United Nations to try unflaggingly to end it.” (A/PV.2124, *paragraph 145*)

Those words remain valid even though they were said more than 50 years ago.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): We thank Brazil for their efforts, their diligence in providing time and their continued engagement with all Security Council members. The text came at a very critical moment, not only because of the conflict between Israel and Hamas and the huge impact it is having on civilians, but also due to the revived dangers for the region and beyond. Albania voted in favour of the draft resolution (S/2023/773) because the text responded to core objectives on the issue and to our coherent and principled position. It strongly and unequivocally condemned Hamas and its indefensible terrorist attacks on Israel on 7 October. As the Secretary-General called on Hamas to do last Sunday, it called for the immediate release of the hostages, which should remain a humanitarian priority. The hostages should be released immediately and unconditionally. It provided for the protection of civilians in accordance with international humanitarian law and for the flow of the humanitarian aid to all those in need. It also supports regional and international efforts for a solution on the ground and embraces a diplomatic solution to the crisis. In that respect, we commend the very active engagement at every level by the United States and others in finding the best solutions on the ground. While we supported the draft resolution, Albania reaffirms its position in full support of Israel and its right to self-defence, like every other nation under attack, which the text falls short of mentioning.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): It is perhaps beyond me to put into words the abject horrors we are witnessing in Gaza. That is why the United Arab Emirates fully supported the Security Council taking action today, and why we still support the Council taking action on the situation. For more than 140 years, the Al Ahli Baptist Hospital has provided medical care

and shelter for generations of Gazans. Yesterday more than 500 Palestinians were killed in a strike that hit the hospital. Each passing hour of this ruinous war makes a mockery of the principles of international humanitarian law. Gaza is laid to waste, and nobody feels safe. We call for a full independent investigation into this incident and for those who are responsible to be held accountable.

As we verify information about the strikes, one fact still remains indisputable: more Palestinians have died in this outbreak of violence than in any other in the history of the conflict. In less than two weeks of bombardment, more than 3,500 Palestinians have been killed and more than 14,000 injured. Will we continue to sit here and compare the casualties on both sides? We support no less than a full humanitarian ceasefire. We do not ask for this to be done at the expense of Israel's security, but so that people may tend to their wounded, bury their dead in dignity and begin putting their lives back together. This ceasefire is also crucial so that vital humanitarian aid may enter and that aid workers can do their work safely.

Hamas is indeed responsible for sparking this latest fire that is now engulfing the streets of Arab capitals around the region. We have openly called them out for the heinous attacks on 7 October. But make no mistake: the kindling was already there, fuelled by decades of violent dehumanization, dispossession and despair. That is why we cannot, however convenient, lose sight of the context of this crisis, the longest-going occupation in the world today of a people that do not wish to be ruled and have been let down again and again and again by all of us.

The United Arab Emirates voted for this draft resolution (S/2023/773) not because it is a perfect text, but because it clearly states basic principles that must be upheld and that the Council is obliged to reinforce and uphold. We sincerely thank Brazil and its delegation for their efforts, and we remain hopeful that in the coming days we can unite behind a draft resolution. We also remain hopeful that, in parallel, diplomatic efforts led by the United States will help lead us all off the brink that we are edging towards.

As I and others said yesterday, the current escalation must drive all of us, but most importantly Israelis and Palestinians, to the urgent work of achieving the two-State solution. Let me be clear that the only alternative

to that is the violence we see right now. Three years ago, my country established diplomatic relations with Israel. The Abraham Accords are grounded in the simple but enduring truth that peace and dialogue are better than violence and enmity. Along with our Israeli and American partners, we sought a new Middle East where coexistence and cooperation deliver prosperity, security and peace for all. The indiscriminate damage visited upon the people of Gaza in pursuit of Israel's security risks extinguishing that hope. The region is already contending with the spillover of this crisis, and the enemies of peace are unapologetic about their aims. Let us not play into their hands.

It has been said over the past few days that this crisis is a test for the international community and for the Security Council. That is true. Noa Argamani, a young Jewish woman abducted by Hamas, is in her second year of computer studies at Ben-Gurion University. Her mother is undergoing cancer treatment, and she is their only child. In a conversation with a journalist about the horror inflicted on this family, Yakov recalled that "in Gaza, too, families are mourning their children". He described Israelis and Palestinians as "two nations with one father" and added that "we can reach true peace, and I am praying for this to happen. Amen to the hostages' return".

Twenty-two-year-old Dunia Abu Rahma, an architectural student in Gaza, is one of the thousands of civilians fleeing south today. Last night, she told CNN that, up until recently, all she had been thinking about was her graduation project. Now all she thinks about is how to be safe.

The test is whether or not we sustain that hope for peace that shines even through a parent's unspeakable anguish and through a child's aspiration to just be normal like the rest of us. We cannot doom millions of people to misery because diplomacy is hard. We must keep trying — again and again and again. We must recognize that, by continuing to fail to respond to the Palestinian people's legitimate aspirations for a country in their homeland, we fuel this unrelenting cycle of violence and hatred. Let us not fail this test — for the sake of Israelis, for the sake of Palestinians and for the sake of all the peoples of the Middle East.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.