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Tuesday, 20 February 2024, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
China	Mr. Zhang Jun/Mr. Sun Zhiqiang
Ecuador	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
France	Mr. De Rivière
Japan	Mr. Yamazaki
Malta	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Sierra Leone	Mr. Kanu
Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
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 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Egypt, Israel, Qatar and Tunisia to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Council invite the observer of the Observer State of Palestine to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

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

Members of the Council have before them document S/2024/173, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Algeria.

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

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

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria): I wish to extend my sincere appreciation for your efforts, Madam President, in convening this meeting to deliberate and take action on draft resolution S/2024/173.

The draft resolution under consideration is the culmination of extensive discussions among Security Council members. As the primary custodian of international peace and security, the Council cannot afford passivity in the face of the calls for a ceasefire in Gaza. By presenting this text, our intention is to empower the Council to fulfil its mandate and protect lives, commencing with an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. Ample time was afforded for Council members to deliberate on the contents of the text. Our approach involved meticulous consideration of received proposals and amendments, resulting in what we believe is a balanced text capable of garnering broad support.

The draft resolution underscores key elements, including: first, a humanitarian ceasefire; secondly, unhindered aid delivery to all parts of the Gaza Strip;

thirdly, the rejection of the forced displacement of Palestinians; fourthly, compliance with the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice; and fifthly, and lastly, the imperative for all parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Throughout the process, we heard calls for giving time to a parallel track in order to preserve its chances, with concerns raised that any action from the Council would jeopardize that effort. However, almost one month after the International Court of Justice issued its orders, there are still no signs of hope for improvement in the situation in Gaza. Silence, we contend, is not a viable option. Now is the time for action and the time for truth.

The members of the Security Council have a responsibility to vote in favour of measures that uphold international peace and security. The draft resolution takes a stance for truth and humanity and stands against the advocates for murder and hatred. A vote in favour of it is a demonstration of support for Palestinians' right to life. Conversely, voting against it implies an endorsement of the brutal violence and collective punishment that are being inflicted on them. A vote in favour of the draft brings hope for hundreds of thousands of children to return to school and enjoy their right to education. Conversely, voting against the draft resolution is a vote in favour of annihilating their dreams of a better life. A vote in favour of the draft resolution stands in solidarity with the rights of Palestinian women, while opposing it means accepting degrading practices that destroy their dignity. Furthermore, supporting the draft resolution means endorsing the Palestinians' right to food, while rejecting it constitutes an approval of starvation as a means of war against hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. A vote in favour of the draft resolution is a defence of the right to health care, while voting against it is an approval of the violation of the sanctity of hospitals and a death sentence for those who escaped it in the first place.

The Council must not merely call for a ceasefire — it must ensure steadfast adherence to it by all parties. The international community must act swiftly, because the value of a ceasefire diminishes with each passing moment. We are rapidly approaching a critical juncture where the call to halt the machinery of violence will lose its significance. Today every Palestinian is a target for death, extermination and genocide. We should all ask ourselves how many innocent lives must be

sacrificed before the Council deems it necessary to call for a ceasefire. For us, and I hope for every Security Council member, Palestinians and Palestinian lives matter. Every one of us must decide where to stand in this tragic chapter of history.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): For months, the United States has tirelessly pushed towards a goal to which all of us should aspire — a sustainable resolution of the Gaza conflict so that Israelis and Palestinians can live side by side and enjoy equal measures of security, dignity and freedom. To build towards that future, the United States is working on a hostage deal between Israel and Hamas, along with Egypt and Qatar. That hostage deal would bring an immediate and sustained period of calm to Gaza for at least six weeks, and from there we could take the time to build a more enduring peace. President Biden has had multiple calls in recent days with Prime Minister Netanyahu, as well as the leaders of Egypt and Qatar, to push that deal forward. Though gaps remain, the key elements are on the table so that if an arrangement is reached, it will help to create the conditions for a sustainable cessation of hostilities, which I know all of us would like to see.

Of course we want the deal to happen as soon as possible, as our exhaustive efforts have shown. But sometimes hard diplomacy takes more time than any of us might like. Believe me, I understand the desire for the Council to act urgently and to positively shape the situation in line with the Security Council's mandate. But that desire cannot blind us to the reality of the situation on the ground. It cannot come at the expense of undermining the only — let me repeat, only — path available towards a longer, durable peace. That is why we have all heard me say over and over again that any action that the Council takes right now should help, not hinder, those sensitive and ongoing negotiations.

We believe that the draft resolution on the table right now (S/2024/173) would in fact negatively impact those negotiations. Demanding an immediate, unconditional ceasefire without an agreement requiring Hamas to release the hostages will not bring about a durable peace. Instead, it could extend the fighting between Hamas and Israel, extend the hostages' time in captivity, an experience described by former hostages as hell, and extend the dire humanitarian crisis that Palestinians are facing in Gaza. None of us want that. I therefore reiterate the United States belief that while numerous parties are engaging in sensitive negotiations, now is

not the time for this draft resolution, which jeopardizes those efforts.

I have communicated our concerns publicly and privately over the past several weeks. We have submitted numerous rounds of edits. All were ignored. Therefore, for that reason, the United States has offered an alternative draft resolution that would do what the text before us does not: pressure Hamas to take the hostage deal that is on the table and help secure a pause that allows humanitarian assistance to reach Palestinian civilians in desperate need.

Once again, there is much more we all agree on, and the alternative draft resolution put forward by the United States is rooted in those shared beliefs. To start, in line with President Biden's comments last week, our text calls for a temporary ceasefire in Gaza, as soon as practicable, based on the formula of all hostages being released. Last I checked, no one here opposes that. A majority of us also agree that it is time for the Council to condemn Hamas. We know because members provided that feedback to Russia on its draft statement by the President of the Security Council and to Algeria on its draft resolution — feedback that was inexplicably ignored. Should the United States draft resolution be adopted, it would be the first to condemn Hamas for the abhorrent attacks of 7 October, including the sexual violence documented that day. The United States text also makes clear that Hamas has no place in the future governance of Gaza, and neither does Hamas represent the dignity or self-determination of the Palestinian people, which, once again, I believe are all things we agree on. In addition, our draft resolution states that there can be no reduction of territory in the Gaza Strip and rejects, as we did before in resolution 2720 (2023), any forced displacements of civilians in Gaza. It also highlights the concerns that many Council members have regarding the fate of civilians in Rafah, making it clear that, under the current circumstances, a major ground offensive into Rafah should not proceed.

This is not, as some members have claimed, an American effort to cover for an imminent ground incursion. Rather, it is a sincere statement of our concern for the 1.5 million civilians who have sought refuge in Rafah. Civilians must be protected and have access to humanitarian assistance and basic services. On that note, our text outlines a path for the implementation of resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023), including provisions that call for the expansion of aid at scale. It also further clarifies and strengthens the mandate

of the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Sigrid Kaag, whose plan I know we all support. As in previous resolutions, it places emphasis on the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers, and it calls for lifting all barriers to the provision of humanitarian assistance, opening additional humanitarian routes and keeping current border-crossings open. Our draft resolution also aims to support the Secretary-General's effort to investigate the personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East who directly participated in 7 October, and it supports the work of the independent review group, led by Catherine Colonna, focused on ensuring the Agency's neutrality. Those and other steps are necessary to restore donor confidence. Finally, and as always, the draft resolution reiterates our unwavering commitment to the vision of the two-State solution, whereby two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders under a revamped and revitalized Palestinian Authority.

The United States draft resolution reflects the many ideas that have been shared over the past month but that are not reflected in the text before us today. And we believe that it will both support the ongoing negotiations and lay the groundwork for a sustainable peace in the region. But, in addition to getting the "what" of the text correct, we also know that it is critical to get the "how" and "when" of it right too. We will work in earnest in negotiating such a text and, indeed, intend to leave time for everyone to comment, rather than impose an arbitrary deadline for the vote.

We are at a pivotal and critical moment: critical for the hostages, who have been held captive for almost 20 weeks in Gaza, and critical for their families, who are desperate to be reunited with their loved ones; critical for Palestinians whose homes and families have been destroyed and who now wonder where they will find their next meal; critical for Israelis, many of whom are still displaced or face barrages of rocket fire; critical for Palestinian civilians in the West Bank, who are at heightened risk of extremist settler violence; critical for humanitarian workers and journalists, who put their lives on the line every day to do their jobs; and critical to everyone who desperately wants to see sustainable peace in the region. That includes, I believe, every single person in this Chamber. Let us therefore commit to doing this the right way and at the right time so that

we can create the right conditions for a safer, more peaceful future.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): For the past five months, unprecedented violence has been unleashed in Gaza, the scale of which has surpassed any conflict faced by humankind since the Second World War. The civilian death toll has reached the shocking threshold of 30,000, and not all of the victims have been counted. During all that time, the Security Council has been unable to adopt a critically important draft resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire. I would like to recall that on 16 October 2022, when Russia submitted the very first draft resolution (S/2023/772) calling for such action, the Palestinian death toll was approximately 1,000. At that time, Western delegations in the Council chose to collectively abstain so as not to incur the wrath of Washington.

It is no exaggeration to say that the recent death toll of more than 28,000 has been the cost of that initial disgraceful inability to act, which is the collective irresponsibility of Western delegations at the Security Council, whose NATO solidarity outweighs any lofty national declarations on their commitment to international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians and humanitarian personnel. Since then, the United States has exercised its right of the veto three times to prevent the Council from adopting a draft resolution demanding a ceasefire. Each time, we heard the same hypocritical calls from the American delegation to wait a little longer and give time for their supposedly effective bilateral diplomacy on the ground. But it led to no results. And it would have been impossible for results to materialize because Washington's ultimate goal is not peace in the Middle East or the protection of civilians, but to secure its geopolitical interests, which require covering for its closest Middle East ally at all costs. That is why, after having pushed through in resolution 2720 (2023) a veritable license for Israel to kill Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories under the pretext of creating the conditions for a cessation of hostilities, as we had warned, the United States continues to cover for the authorities of West Jerusalem and maintain their impunity for numerous crimes against the people of Gaza at the international level.

On behalf of the Group of Arab States, the delegation of Algeria proposed a robust and balanced draft resolution (S/2024/173) that focuses on the long-

awaited ceasefire. Our Algerian colleagues organized the negotiation process in good faith, consulted with all delegations and tried to take their comments into account to the greatest extent possible. We should like to especially commend the professionalism of the Algerian negotiating team. However, this time, from the very beginning, the United States delegation effectively made an ultimatum, which demanded a halt to working on the document. Our American colleagues asserted that the draft resolution proposed by Algeria is dangerous because it could interfere with delicate diplomacy on the ground, and we just heard the same thing again in this Chamber. I urge everyone to consider the cynicism of that argument. Washington is effectively saying that the Security Council is standing in the way of its plans and demanding that the Council not interfere with them. Yesterday my American colleague stated publicly that she would vote against the Algerian draft resolution.

Time after time, the United States has shown complete disregard for international institutions, multilateral diplomacy and international law. Today the authority of the Security Council is essentially at stake. We call on Council members to demonstrate solidarity to counter the arbitrary actions of Washington, which is willing to make any sacrifice in any region in order to realize its geopolitical ambitions. The United States Government cares neither for the lives of Gazans nor for the views of its own people, who have become increasingly vocal in their support for the Palestinian people. I hope that other members of the Council are still willing to listen, if not to the voice of conscience, at least to public opinion. And public opinion will no longer forgive the United Nations for its inaction.

The situation in the southern part of the Gaza Strip around the city of Rafah is extremely dangerous in the context of Israel's military plans. Their implementation would lead to a catastrophic expansion of the scale of the humanitarian disaster, with Rafah at its epicentre, given that 1 million residents of the Gaza Strip have fled the hostilities to that city on the border with Egypt. Everything possible must be done to ensure that does not happen. Our shared task is to end the bloodshed as soon as possible and provide conditions for the establishment of reliable channels for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people in this enclave. We urge the members of the Council to vote in favour of the Algerian draft resolution.

The President: The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Algeria, China, Ecuador, France, Guyana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland

Against:

United States of America

Abstaining:

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The President: The draft resolution received 13 votes in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention. The draft resolution was not adopted, owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Council.

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

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): Over the past few weeks, we have made it incredibly clear that the draft resolution that the Security Council just voted on (S/2024/173) would not achieve the goal of a sustainable peace and could in fact run counter to it. Proceeding with a vote today was wishful and irresponsible. And while we therefore cannot support a draft resolution that would put sensitive negotiations in jeopardy, we look forward to engaging on a text that we believe will address so many of the concerns we all share — a text that can and should be adopted by the Council so that we can have a temporary ceasefire as soon as is practicable, based on a formula whereby all hostages would be released.

A temporary ceasefire is critical to getting aid into the hands of Palestinian civilians who desperately need it. We should look towards a text that will enable us to finally condemn Hamas for its horrific attacks on 7 October, which set this conflict in motion, and to empower Senior Coordinator Kaag and the United Nations, because her success is the success of this Organization, and because it is needed so badly in order to ensure that civilians get the aid they need more efficiently and effectively, and that they get more of it — period. We need it to ensure that ultimately we can work together to help create a future in which Israelis and Palestinians live in States of their own, side by side,

in peace. We are committed to engaging constructively to that end on our draft resolution with all Council members in the coming days, and we will continue to engage tirelessly in direct diplomacy and negotiations on the ground.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China voted in favour of draft resolution S/2024/173, and we are deeply dissatisfied and disappointed that the United States vetoed it. Algeria submitted the draft resolution on behalf of the Arab States, demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, the immediate release of all hostages, guaranteed access for humanitarian assistance and a rejection of forced displacement. That is urgently required by the situation on the ground and is also based on the minimum requirements for humanity. It deserves the support of all the members of the Security Council. Algeria displayed a rational, sincere and open attitude and held lengthy and extensive consultations with all parties on the draft resolution. It also took on board many constructive ideas designed to make the text more balanced.

The outcome of today's vote clearly shows that where the issue of a ceasefire to halt the fighting in Gaza is concerned, it is not that the Security Council does not have an overwhelming consensus, but rather that the United States exercise of its veto power has stifled that consensus. The United States veto sends the wrong message and renders the situation in Gaza more dangerous. Meanwhile, as the draft resolution is being vetoed, innocent people in Gaza continue to be killed in the fighting and are struggling on the brink of death. The United States claim that the draft resolution would interfere with the ongoing diplomatic efforts is totally untenable. Given the situation on the ground, the continued passive avoidance of an immediate ceasefire is tantamount to giving a green light to continued slaughter. While the draft resolution is being vetoed, the spillover of the conflict continues to destabilize the entire Middle East, increasing the risk of a wider war. Only extinguishing the flames of war in Gaza will prevent the fires of hell from engulfing the entire region.

The Security Council must act quickly to stop the carnage in the Middle East. While the draft resolution is being vetoed, the basics of international law are being trampled on and the bedrock of the multilateral system is being eroded. The Secretary-General has already written to the Council invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations, and the International Court of Justice has issued provisional measures. The

Council must respond forcefully to the serious violations of international law and international humanitarian law in the Gaza conflict and uphold the authority of the international rule of law.

The Security Council must take action to push for a ceasefire. That should not be a matter for debate. It is rather a moral obligation that the Council cannot shy away from. It is a legal responsibility that the Council must assume. Moreover, it is a political requirement that the Council must fulfil in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

The veto cannot muffle the strong call for a ceasefire and an end to the war. The Security Council cannot stop its efforts to uphold justice and fulfil its responsibilities just because of the veto.

China urges Israel to heed the call of the international community, abandon its plan for a Rafah offensive and stop its collective punishment of the people of Palestine. We expect countries with significant influence to base their actions less on political calculations, to be truly impartial and responsible and to make the right choice in pushing for a ceasefire in Gaza.

We call on the international community to pool all diplomatic efforts to give the people of Gaza a chance to live, give the people of the entire Middle East region a chance to have peace and to provide a chance for justice to be upheld.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): We voted in favour of draft resolution S/2024/173 because the killing of civilians in Gaza must stop.

The suffering that Palestinians are enduring is beyond anything a human being should be subjected to. A possible Israeli ground offensive in Rafah would have unimaginable humanitarian consequences. It would push us on a path of no return. It is our duty to react before we wake up in a nightmare. And that is why we are convinced it is high time for the Council to put a brake on those actions.

Let me emphasize once again that Slovenia condemns the horrific terrorist attack by Hamas on 7 October, as well as its continuing attacks on Israel. We continue to call for the immediate and safe release of all hostages. We feel the pain of their relatives and loved ones. We thank the leaders of Egypt, Qatar and the United States for their tireless efforts, and we hope that the negotiations they are facilitating will soon bring peace to Gaza and return the hostages home safely.

However, it is the responsibility of the Council to maintain international peace and security. We believe that everyone can — and should — contribute their piece of the puzzle to efforts aimed at bringing peace.

We believe in the complementarity of all efforts — bilateral, regional and those of the Council. The Council's role is important, and it is indispensable in ending hostilities, bringing hostages home, rapidly and safely delivering humanitarian assistance and drafting a day-after road map.

Lastly, the Council has a responsibility to the international community. Its expectations have been clearly expressed through General Assembly resolutions (resolution ES/10-21 and resolution ES/10-22), with the overwhelming support of Member States. It has been clearly manifested by citizens across the globe. Their voices are loud and clear. The war needs to stop. The Security Council needs to listen to those voices of global consciousness and respond to their demands and pleas. And it all starts with a call for a ceasefire to end hostilities, to bring hostages home, to bring water and food to starving Palestinians and to silence and clear the skies over Gaza and Israel — a call addressed to both sides, Israel and Hamas.

It is our firm belief that Algeria proposed a balanced text, calling for respect of international humanitarian law and human rights law, addressing all violations committed by both sides of the conflict and calling for accountability for those violations. It puts the protection of civilians, as a civilized norm, at the centre of our action.

We therefore deeply regret that the Council was not able to adopt the draft resolution, which we supported strongly, but we cannot give up. It is our responsibility to continue working towards a consensus in this body for peace in the Middle East.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland voted in favour of draft resolution S/2024/173 and regrets that it was not adopted despite the very broad support it enjoys among Council members.

I would like to thank the Algerian delegation for its efforts in building consensus around the text, which calls in particular for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held captive in Gaza since the acts of terror perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October.

Almost three weeks have passed since the first draft of the text was submitted. Switzerland welcomed the intense negotiations taking place in the region and stressed the need to give them the necessary time to reach a result. At the same time, we stressed the responsibility of the Council to act, in accordance with its mandate, for the respect of international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians.

We regret that a firmer and more explicit condemnation of Hamas's acts of terror was not included in the draft resolution, despite the appeals of several Council members, including Switzerland.

However, the need to protect civilians in Gaza is growing by the day. Respect for international humanitarian law and human rights, in particular with regard to the protection of civilians, must remain a priority for the Council. Under the Geneva Conventions, the delivery of humanitarian assistance must be safe, rapid and unimpeded. We cannot allow hundreds of thousands of besieged civilians to be left to face famine and epidemics, without adequate security guarantees for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and for their own protection.

Moreover, Switzerland is very concerned about the risk of a large-scale military operation in Rafah and the subsequent regional escalation it could entail. The draft resolution was therefore intended as a preventive measure against further escalation on the ground, which would endanger the lives of all civilians, including the hostages. That is why the call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza is in line with our collective commitment to respect and ensure respect for the Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian law in all circumstances.

Switzerland remains committed to unified action by the Council in that direction. We also recall that the parties are obliged to respect the two previous resolutions on this subject (resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023)). And we also recall the mandatory nature of the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice on 26 January.

Mr. De Rivièrè (France) (*spoke in French*): France thanks Algeria for proposing draft resolution S/2024/173. It regrets that it could not be adopted, given the catastrophic situation on the ground.

The immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, explicitly called for by resolutions 2712 (2023)

and 2720 (2023), as well as the draft resolution that was just rejected, must happen without further delay.

It is urgent that an agreement on a ceasefire be reached that will finally guarantee the protection of all civilians and the massive and unhindered delivery of emergency assistance. The human toll and the humanitarian situation in Gaza are intolerable, and Israeli operations must cease.

It is urgent that massive amounts of humanitarian aid be delivered to the people of Gaza. It is imperative to open the Ashdod port, a direct land route from Jordan and all crossing points.

It is unacceptable that the Council has still not condemned the terrorist acts committed by Hamas and other terrorist groups on 7 October, as well as the sexual violence used as a weapon of war by those terrorists. France deplores that and calls on the Council to quickly put an end to that culpable ambiguity.

France reiterates its unwavering commitment to Israel's security and its solidarity with the Israeli people in the wake of the terrorist attacks.

France will remain resolutely committed to the Council's full mobilization on all aspects of the crisis: security, humanitarian and political.

France reiterates that only a two-State solution can meet the security needs of Israel and the Israeli people, as well as the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians for a State. That involves the creation of a Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): I wish to begin by expressing our gratitude to Guyanese presidency for convening this meeting to take action on this important draft resolution on the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (S/2024/173). We also express our sincere appreciation to Algeria for the tireless work that led to the submission of the draft resolution aimed at ending the totally unacceptable and unbearable suffering of the Palestinian people and the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza.

By voting in favour of this Security Council draft resolution, Mozambique aligns itself with the international community as a whole in its effort overwhelmingly calling for the immediate cessation of hostilities in the Gaza strip. We consider it imperative that all parties scrupulously comply with

their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, in particular with regard to the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure. We strongly call for total and full compliance with the provisional measures laid down by the order of the International Court of Justice within the scope of articles II and III of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, handed down on 26 January 2024.

Throughout history, we have had our share of painful experience with war and armed conflict. It is on that basis, and on that of the dictates of the laws of war that we embrace, that Mozambique firmly opposes the forced displacement of the Palestinian civilian population, women and children in particular. In that connection, we strongly appeal for the full implementation of resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023). In the same vein, Mozambique demands the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and the guarantee of humanitarian access to meet the medical needs of all hostages.

We urge the international community, and the Security Council in particular, to continue working together tirelessly to achieve peace and stability in the region, based on a two-State solution for the people of Palestine and Israel.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea voted in favour of the draft resolution proposed by Algeria (S/2024/173), considering the urgent need for a humanitarian ceasefire to end the suffering of civilians in Gaza. Right now in Rafah, where more than half of the entire population of Gaza is densely packed, people are panicking before the looming catastrophe that may be caused by a full-scale ground operation. The Republic of Korea could not ignore the possibility of another humanitarian calamity that will lead to a huge number of fatalities. Nonetheless, we adhere to our position that the heinous terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October are the direct cause of the current disaster in Gaza. It is therefore regrettable that a clear and unified condemnation of the deplorable terrorist acts perpetrated by Hamas was missing in the draft resolution.

The Republic of Korea takes note that serious negotiations among key stakeholders — namely, Egypt, Qatar, the United States and Israel — are vigorously under way on the ground to achieve the long-overdue

release of the hostages. We express our strong support and appreciation for those efforts.

The Republic of Korea will continue to engage in Council deliberations, actively and constructively, to achieve a ceasefire in Gaza and realize the two-State solution.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): It has been more than four months of devastation, hostilities and suffering since Hamas's horrifying acts of terror against Israel. We are witnessing an alarming escalation of violence and an unimaginable humanitarian catastrophe. The situation on the ground is only worsening as each day goes by. Particularly, the situation in Rafah is deeply worrisome.

Japan appreciates the ongoing tireless diplomatic efforts led by the United States and other countries to secure the release of hostages, improve the humanitarian situation and calm the situation as soon as possible. Japan believes that a humanitarian ceasefire needs to be realized promptly in such a way as to ensure an environment conducive to carrying out sufficient humanitarian assistance activities and to lead to the release of the remaining hostages, thereby resulting in the realization of a sustainable ceasefire. Based on that position, we call on all the parties concerned to act immediately as a humanitarian imperative. In that vein, Japan voted in favour of the draft resolution (S/2024/173).

We would like to express our gratitude to Algeria for its efforts to coordinate various positions among Council members. At the same time, in an effort to ensure a fairer and more balanced text, the draft resolution should have included a condemnation of Hamas's terrorist attacks, on which the Security Council has so far failed to speak out.

Although we could not agree on a draft resolution that all Council members are able to support, we are all engaging seriously to stop the violence. The Council should be a place to explore and find peace and security jointly, not a place to point fingers. Japan will continue to work constructively with other Council members to find a path forward to achieve peace and stability in the region.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): Malta also thanks Algeria for its measured and constructive approach as penholder throughout the negotiations.

Malta voted in favour of this draft resolution (S/2024/173), and we unequivocally reiterate our call

for a permanent ceasefire. It is therefore regrettable that the use of the veto prevents the Council from calling for an end to the conflict. We also believe that the Council has provided the ongoing negotiations taking place on the ground the necessary space and time. However, regrettably, we still find ourselves on the precipice of another wave of hostilities. That will undoubtedly have catastrophic consequences on the civilian population in Rafah, an area already designated as a safe zone. We also reject and denounce any forced displacement of the Palestinian civilian population from and within Gaza. Such actions amount to grave breaches of international law.

The severely deteriorating humanitarian conditions and the threat of famine within Gaza are extremely troubling and need to be addressed urgently. Israel is required to facilitate the full, rapid, safe and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza. At the same time, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East remains essential to ensuring an effective humanitarian response. The broader situation in the region also continues to be deeply worrisome. In the circumstances, the full and immediate implementation of resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023) is now more pressing than ever. We should be clear that the Council has a duty and responsibility to ensure that its decisions are respected. We also echo the call for the remaining hostages to be immediately, safely and unconditionally released, and we call on the Council to denounce the terrorist acts of 7 October 2023.

In conclusion, Malta underlines its unwavering commitment to a comprehensive peace based on a two-State solution.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): We want to see the fighting in Gaza end as soon as possible, in a way that never again allows Hamas to carry out the appalling terrorist attacks on Israel that we saw on 7 October of last year. Palestinian civilians are facing a devastating humanitarian crisis. We are particularly worried about the situation in Rafah, where a military operation could have appalling consequences for civilians sheltering there with nowhere else to go. Ongoing negotiations are critical to ensuring the release of the hostages held in Gaza.

We are calling for an immediate suspension of the fighting in order to get aid in and hostages out, leading to a permanent, sustainable ceasefire. That means

releasing all the hostages; forming a new Palestinian Government for the West Bank and Gaza, accompanied by an international support package; removing Hamas's capacity to launch attacks against Israel; ensuring that Hamas is no longer in charge of Gaza; and establishing a political horizon that provides a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-State solution.

We welcome the efforts of our Algerian colleagues on draft resolution S/2024/173, and we regret that some of our proposals were not taken on board. Simply calling for a ceasefire, as the draft resolution does, will not make it happen. Indeed, because it could endanger the hostage negotiations, it could actually make a ceasefire less likely. The way to stop the fighting and potentially stop it from restarting is to begin with a pause to get hostages out and aid in. That is what we are calling for. It could end the fighting now. We will continue to work for a stop to the fighting, a humanitarian response at scale, the release of all hostages and the delivery of the two sovereign States of Israel and Palestine, which will ensure peace, security and justice for both countries.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): The delegation of Sierra Leone would like to thank Algeria for proposing and facilitating efforts to agree to a draft resolution (S/2024/173) that among other things would have led to an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. We also thank the Algerian delegation for leading a reasonable, transparent and inclusive process. Sierra Leone voted in favour of the draft resolution because of the imperative for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. The Security Council is mandated to act promptly and effectively in order to maintain international peace and security. The Council has had its attention called to the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, and the Secretary-General has called on it to act under Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Some members of the Security Council, including representatives of the delegation of Sierra Leone, have had an opportunity to visit the Rafah crossing both from the Egyptian border and from Israel. Their assessment has been that only a humanitarian ceasefire will put an end to the intolerable killings in Gaza and to the looming and unthinkable catastrophe in Rafah. Sierra Leone appreciates and commends the member States that have embarked on diplomatic engagement with parties to the conflict to secure a prolonged pause in the hostilities. But while that is being done, we remain worried that reaching a meaningful conclusion in political terms takes time — a luxury that the suffering

Palestinian people, the families of the hostages and the hostages themselves cannot afford.

The other main organs of the United Nations have acted in a timely and effective manner in this tragic conflict. The General Assembly has adopted resolutions ES-10/21 and ES-10/22, with an overwhelming majority demanding, in the latter, an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. The Secretary-General invoked Article 99 of the Charter, last used more than half a century ago, to warn us in the Council of the humanitarian catastrophe that we are now seeing in Gaza. As Council members, we were urged to demand an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. The International Court of Justice has acted promptly and rightly when called on to do so by South Africa. Following the requests for an indication of provisional measures, the Court, in its 26 January order, specifically ordered, among other things, that

“the State of Israel shall take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip” (*Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)*, para.86).

The Court deemed it necessary to emphasize that all parties to the conflict in the Gaza Strip are bound by international humanitarian law. It expressed its grave concern about the fate of the hostages abducted during the attack in Israel on 7 October 2023 and held since then by Hamas and other armed groups, and called for their immediate and unconditional release. The Court further reminded the parties that the provisional measures ordered under article 41 of its Statute have binding effect and therefore create international legal obligations for any party to whom the provisional measures are addressed.

Sierra Leone is of the view that in the absence of any prima facie change in the current perilous humanitarian conditions prevailing in Gaza, coupled with the continuing hostage situation despite the 26 January order of the International Court of Justice, the Security Council is now more than ever compelled to act to use the myriad of tools available to it to save human lives and put a check on the mounting death toll and inordinate destruction of civilian objects.

It is extremely worrisome that more than 130 days into the conflict, a draft resolution calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, demanding the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, rejecting the forced displacement of Palestinians, reiterating the call for full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access in Gaza and the optimal political solution of a two-State solution could not be adopted, which we deeply regret. At this stage, considering the immense suffering, death and anguish in Gaza, the Security Council must not relent until a complete halt to the continued hostilities in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank is achieved. To do otherwise is to accept passively the prevailing criticisms of the dysfunctionality of the Council. Meanwhile, the reality in Gaza is that of famine-like conditions, malnutrition, displacement, the spread of infectious diseases and the potential for spillover of the conflict to the wider region. Our failure to act extinguishes hope — the hope that 1.3 million Palestinians in Rafah have supplicated to us — and beyond that the hope that humankind has placed in us as members to deliver on the Council's mandate. This must awaken our resolve to act.

In conclusion, Sierra Leone sincerely looks forward to not only having a positive outcome from the ongoing diplomatic negotiation being mediated by the United States, Egypt and Qatar, but also to a Security Council product that would call for a full and unconditional humanitarian ceasefire and the release of all the hostages. That, we hope, will lead to an end in the fighting and alleviate the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip.

Mr. Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Algeria for the draft resolution (S/2024/173) that was put forward. Ecuador voted in favour of it because we believe that the Security Council must take a stand on the humanitarian situation, which continues to deteriorate, with thousands of innocent victims. The draft resolution on which we voted was not perfect, and not all of the issues we believe to be appropriate were included in it, but it was presented following a negotiations process and included the necessary elements about a situation that is deteriorating by the minute.

Mainly, the text on which we just voted requested a humanitarian ceasefire that would make it possible to alleviate the situation for civilians. It also demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and deplored violence against civilians and all acts

of terrorism, including, implicitly, the horrific acts committed by Hamas in October last year. However, it should be mentioned that Ecuador, like several members of the Council, urgently requested that the text include explicit condemnation of the terrorist acts perpetrated by Hamas. We regret that that condemnation was not included in the text. We believe that it is important to clearly indicate responsibility, which is apparent now, in order to later attribute responsibility, which will be disclosed in the future.

Ecuador deplores the fact that, at this time, a draft resolution could not be adopted. We will continue working so that the Council can take a stance and take effective action via a successful adoption.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today we bear witness to another dark chapter in the history of the Security Council. It was again written by the delegation of the United States, which continues to pursue the same goal — to cover for its closest Middle East ally and stall for time as much as possible so that it can complete its inhumane plans for Gaza, specifically to force Palestinians out of the Gaza Strip and completely cleanse the enclave, literally turning it into an uninhabited territory.

Under those circumstances, Israeli political circles do not hesitate to think in terms that completely rule out the two-State solution. By having once again counterposed calls to end the carnage in Gaza and bring about a ceasefire to the demand to condemn the actions of Hamas, our United States colleagues have hypocritically remained silent about the fact that, on 18 October 2023, they vetoed the Brazilian draft resolution (S/2023/773) containing such condemnation.

The draft resolution (S/2024/173) put forward by Algeria had the potential to turn the tide and stop the destruction of Palestinians in Gaza. Regrettably, the fourth veto cast by the United States prevented that from happening and doomed thousands of peaceful citizens in Gaza to death. However, everyone should understand that the result is not a failure of the Security Council, which was actually united today, but of the destructive policy of a single member — the United States. Full responsibility for the consequences falls on Washington, regardless of its attempts to shirk its responsibility by talking about its “important mediation efforts”.

Regardless of how bitter the aftertaste of today's vote, we have no intention of giving up. The Security

Council's demand for an immediate ceasefire remains imperative. Without it, any product of the Council would be devoid of practical meaning. Members have all had the opportunity to see that, based on the example of toothless humanitarian resolutions on Gaza previously adopted Council. They all remained on paper because, as we warned, in conditions of active hostilities, it is impossible to deliver humanitarian aid or monitor humanitarian pauses.

Turning to the text put forward by the United States, which was so proactively championed by the representative of the United States today, as far as we know, that text has not even been officially circulated at the Security Council, not to mention the fact that there was no comprehensive discussion thereof. For that reason, for now, it appears to be further spoilers, which are designed to detract attention from the most recent shameful veto cast by the United States. It was a veto on a critically significant draft resolution for a ceasefire in Gaza.

We call on the members the Security Council not to be misled by ludicrous and duplicitous admonitions about the need to wait just a bit longer. The Security Council and the world have waited for five months. And each passing hour we wait brings with it an increasing number of human victims. The United States draft text does not include — I emphasize, does not include — any calls for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. The text refers only to a temporary ceasefire, and only when conditions are right. Therefore, this brainchild of the United States is no viable alternative, and cannot be a viable alternative, to the Algerian draft resolution, which the United States vetoed. It is yet another bad-faith attempt by Washington to stall for time for the purposes of advancing Israel's interests and allowing it to resolve the Palestinian question once and for all.

Our shared objective is to prevent that from taking place and to achieve just peace between Palestine and Israel, on the basis of Security Council resolutions and General Assembly resolutions. Let us resolve the issue together. And perhaps our United States colleagues will at some point have their conscience awakened.

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude to all members of the Security Council for constructively participating in the negotiation process. I also thank all States that voted for the adoption of draft resolution S/2024/173, which primarily calls for a ceasefire in

Gaza, and I even thank those States that did not object to its adoption.

The draft resolution would have sent a strong message to the Palestinians. It would have told them that the world will not be silent about their ordeal. Unfortunately, however, the Security Council once again failed to rise to people's calls and aspirations. But that failure does not absolve the Council of the duty to shoulder its responsibilities. It does not absolve the international community of its obligations vis-à-vis the unarmed Palestinian people. It does not absolve the occupation authorities of their obligation to implement the precautionary measures of the International Court of Justice.

It is high time to put an end to the aggression and to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza. It is clear that resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023) have not achieved their desired objectives and that the assistance has not met the basic needs of the Palestinian people. We have to acknowledge that only a ceasefire can achieve the desired objective. The current situation requires everyone, as President Tebboune of Algeria has stressed, to uphold the purposes and principles of the United Nations, provide the necessary protection to the Palestinian people and put an end to the historic injustice they have been facing.

The peoples of our region have always considered the Security Council to be the main source of international legitimacy. But it has unfortunately failed them once again. Our message to the Council today is that the international community must respond to the calls for ending the killing of Palestinians by demanding an immediate ceasefire. All who are hindering that objective should review their policies and their calculations, because wrong decisions taken today will have a cost for our region and our world tomorrow. That cost will be violence and instability. The members of the Council should examine their consciences and ask themselves what the results of their decisions will be and how history will judge them.

Before I conclude, I want to tell everyone that we will bury our martyrs this evening in Rafah, in Gaza and in all Palestine, and that Algeria will return tomorrow on behalf of the Arab nation, the Muslim nation and the free peoples of the world, accompanied by the souls of the thousands of innocent people who have been killed by the Israeli occupation with no accountability whatsoever. Algeria will return to knock on the doors

of the Security Council once again and to call for an end to the bloodshed in Palestine. We will not stop until the Council fully assumes its responsibilities and imposes an immediate ceasefire. We will never tire, and our determination will never waver.

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

Guyana is disappointed that the Council has once again been unable to deliver a ceasefire for the people of Gaza. A ceasefire would be the difference between life and death for the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and others trapped in the war zone that Gaza has become. The delegation of Algeria approached the submission of draft resolution S/2024/173 with great patience, transparency and inclusivity. It has listened to all sides, acquiescing to requests for additional time to be given to other efforts under way. It has been almost three weeks since the draft was first circulated, and we still find ourselves at square one. In that time, almost 2,000 more Palestinians have been killed in Gaza and another 2,000 injured. In those three weeks, every aspect of life in Gaza has gotten worse. Internal displacement has increased, with a serious crisis on the way in Rafah. The food insecurity there has continued to worsen, with the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report stating that Gaza now has the highest share of people facing devastating levels of acute food insecurity that the IPC has ever classified for any given area or country.

The humanitarian situation has been described as increasingly severe. Humanitarian access is extremely limited, and people's desperation has led them to loot aid trucks to secure a morsel of food. The population is in dire straits. The most vulnerable among them, including children, the elderly and people with underlying conditions, are especially vulnerable to malnutrition. All of that is happening in freezing temperatures.

In that time, we have also seen a further hardening of positions for the worse. For example, we have heard the determination of the Israeli Government to proceed with a ground operation in Rafah, despite the strong urging to the contrary by many of its friends and partners and others in the international community. We know what a ground operation in Rafah would mean for the people who were driven there by the Israel Defense Forces. The orders of the International Court of Justice of 26 January are being completely ignored, as though there is no obligation to adhere to them.

United Nations personnel are continuing to operate in Gaza under extremely dangerous circumstances, with unprecedented numbers of them killed since 7 October. Deconfliction mechanisms are not being respected; therefore everyone is at risk and nowhere is safe.

What else needs to happen to act for the people in Gaza? How many more lives must be lost? How many more must be maimed? How many more? We need a ceasefire now. Resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023) cannot be fully implemented if there is no ceasefire. The longer we take to agree on the need for a ceasefire, the longer the Council will be seen as being complicit in what is taking place in Gaza.

To be clear, Guyana also calls for the release of all hostages taken on 7 October and of Palestinians unlawfully detained in Israeli prisons without trial. Although progress has been stalled for decades, the two-State solution remains the best option for a permanent and lasting resolution of the Palestinian question. The current situation in Gaza puts the two-State solution at great risk, especially given the rhetoric from some Israeli Government officials.

Guyana calls on the Council to act now for Gaza and for the future of both Palestine and Israel. A peaceful and stable Israel depends on a peaceful and stable Palestine. The two are not mutually exclusive, and peace in Palestine and Israel is crucial for lasting peace and stability in the Middle East region.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): We thank you, Madam President, and your friendly country of Guyana for your leadership of the Security Council.

We also thank Algeria for all its efforts and for the statement delivered a few minutes ago by my brother Ambassador Bendjama, bringing forth a draft resolution on behalf of the Group of Arab States (S/2024/173), which was just voted upon, regarding the grave situation that continues to be faced by the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip as Israel, the occupying Power, carries on with its genocidal war.

We also thank the 13 members of the Security Council that voted in favour of the draft resolution. We also thank them for their intense engagement with the Arab Group, led by our brother the Ambassador

of Algeria, over the course of the past three weeks, negotiating in good faith to try to save the lives of Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and not allow the looming catastrophe to fly over our heads and lead to further devastation in the Gaza Strip. We sincerely thank them for that effort, for their principled position and for their determination for a ceasefire to be demanded and implemented now to save lives, to save the Gaza Strip and to save the 1.5 million Palestinians in the Rafah district.

The draft resolution was brought to the Council precisely because Israel persists with its onslaught and with every single grave breach it has been committing, despite the near-unanimous calls by the international community for a ceasefire and despite the provisional measures of the International Court of Justice ordering Israel to cease all acts of genocide and incitement to genocide and to ensure humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, who every day are facing death and destruction and the torment of starvation and repeated forced displacement.

It has been nearly three weeks since I last addressed the Council following the Court's order (see S/PV.9540), appealing for action to be taken to ensure the implementation of the provisional measures, to ensure a ceasefire that would protect the Palestinian people and to avert the further ravaging of their lives by the Israeli onslaught. But our appeals have regrettably been to no avail. Between our previous Council meeting on 31 January and today, the casualty toll has risen from 26,000 Palestinians killed by the Israeli occupying forces to now almost 30,000 people, and more than 69,000 people injured. That means in just the past 20 days alone, Israel has killed nearly 4,000 more Palestinian children, women and men. That is in just 20 days.

That is the deplorable consequence of inaction. It means more than 200 Palestinians killed every day. It means that, by the time this Security Council meeting ends, more than 25 Palestinians will have been killed. It means that more babies will be murdered, wounded, amputated and orphaned and that more children will die of hunger, hypothermia and disease. It means the continued threat of the further forced displacement of families, the looming danger of a mass expulsion or, worse, the slaughter of the nearly 1.5 million people in Rafah, who have nowhere to flee and no protection whatsoever. It means the continued deprivation of the entire population of Gaza, left without the food, water,

medicine and shelter essential to alleviate suffering and ensure survival. It means that human lives that could have been spared and saved are instead being forsaken to Israel's genocidal war machine, deliberately and knowingly by those who oppose a ceasefire.

We all know that. We know the staggering figures. We have heard the warnings from the Secretary-General, the heads of all United Nations agencies on the ground, dozens of independent special rapporteurs and humanitarian and human rights agencies the world over. We have seen it with our own eyes in pictures and videos that have seared and stained our collective conscience and broken our hearts and our humanity.

In the face of Israel's brazen violation of the order of the International Court of Justice, the Court sent another warning by issuing another decision on 16 February, reminding Israel that it is bound to fully comply with its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and all provisional measures ordered by the Court on 26 January. The Court also had to remind Israel that its obligations should be effective immediately.

The call for a ceasefire should have been agreed to long ago. What threshold has to be crossed for the Council to finally demand a ceasefire? What could be more serious than the crime of genocide? As my brother Amar said, history will judge the Council harshly. It is already doing so, as the Council's credibility and authority are being impaired in the eyes of people all over the world, perhaps irreparably. But we will not be complicit with this inaction. We have a duty to our people to seek every possible pathway to bring an end to the slaughter, trauma and terror and to the threats to expel them from their land. We will not be silent, and we will take every legitimate means of action to uphold our sacred obligations, defend and protect our people and pursue justice for them. That is why we have returned to the Security Council over and over again, imploring it to act to protect our people. That is why we will not relent in seeking accountability, calling on the Council, the General Assembly and all States to act in line with the Charter of the United Nations and all obligations under international law, without selectivity and without exception. We will not stop demanding accountability for the war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide that Israel is perpetrating against the Palestinian people. But accountability must move beyond words in this Chamber. It must mean

that there will be real consequences for the occupying Power's criminal behaviour.

In that regard, I just returned around midnight last night from The Hague, where representatives of the State of Palestine stood before the International Court of Justice, appealing to the Court for Justice after the more than 75 years of Nakba, 56 years of belligerent occupation, 17 years of blockades and nearly 140 days of a vindictive, punitive siege and massacres perpetrated by Israel in Gaza. That is a genocide. What crimes has Israel not yet committed? Together with an unprecedented number of countries, we have gone to the Court to confront Israel's impunity, which has made life a living hell for the Palestinian people, appealing for an immediate and complete end to the illegal colonial occupation and apartheid regime — the root cause of all the ills that our people are suffering, including this genocidal war. The Court has fulfilled its solemn duty, acting swiftly both in its response to the case brought before it by South Africa against Israel under the Genocide Convention and in response to the General Assembly's request for an advisory opinion, which we hope will be a true turning point in the quest for accountability and for justice for the Palestinian people.

When will the Security Council finally fulfil its solemn duty? When will the Council act to demand the ceasefire that a majority of the rest of the international community has been demanding for months? The veto of the draft resolution is not only regrettable after weeks of consultations with every single Council member and the enduring patience of the State of Palestine, the Arab States and virtually the entire international community, which for months have demanded a ceasefire, but it is absolutely reckless and dangerous, again shielding Israel even as it commits the most shocking crimes while exposing millions of innocent Palestinian civilians to its wrath and further untold horrors. It is not Israel that should be protected by the use of the veto. It is Palestinian children, women and men who must be protected by the Council's actions now. Only with a ceasefire can we give life a chance, along with the implementation of resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023), as you correctly indicated, Madam President. A ceasefire would allow these two resolutions to be implemented so that humanitarian assistance can reach the millions of desperate people in need, so that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and other agencies

can deliver life-saving aid and our collective efforts can chart a path of justice and peace. As long as the Council fails to demand a ceasefire, it will not only be considered derelict in its duties but also an enabler of the horrific crimes that we are currently witnessing in the Gaza Strip.

The message that this veto sends Israel today is that it can continue to get away with murder. Israel cannot, should not and will not get away with it. We will not allow it. The veto does not absolve Israel or those who shield it of their obligations, not here in the Security Council and not in the International Court of Justice or anywhere else. Even if the Security Council continues to shirk its responsibilities and be obstructed by a permanent member's use of the veto over and over again, the other entities of the international system are upholding their responsibilities, and one day, Palestinian children will not be viewed as a demographic threat but as children with a right to life and to the fulfilment of their hopes and dreams.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Erdan (Israel): Since 7 October the Security Council has voted on numerous draft resolutions constructed around the same flawed theme — the concept of a ceasefire. The word is constantly mentioned in the Security Council and the General Assembly and by United Nations officials and agencies as if it were a silver bullet or a magical solution to all of the region's problems. For the past 137 days, the only solution that has been discussed on the international stage is this absurd notion of a ceasefire. Will a ceasefire bring the hostages home? Will a ceasefire eliminate Hamas? Will a ceasefire disarm Hizbullah, the Houthis and all the other Iranian terrorist proxies in our region? Will a ceasefire end the genocidal ambitions of Palestinian terror groups aiming for Israel's annihilation? We are still waiting for President Abbas to condemn the 7 October massacre. What exactly will that silver bullet of a ceasefire achieve? A ceasefire would achieve one thing and one thing only — the survival of Hamas. The exact opposite of how it is portrayed, a ceasefire would be a death sentence for many more Israelis and Gazans. Supporting a ceasefire means supporting the survival of jihadist terrorists who will continue butchering Israelis and endlessly spilling the blood of innocent civilians.

There is a reason that the International Court of Justice unanimously and rightly rejected South Africa's

attempt to undermine Israel's right to defend itself by calling for a ceasefire. The very idea that Israel would be denied that fundamental right, while Hamas would be free to continue its terror and hold hostages, is morally unthinkable, because as everyone knows, Hamas will not even read the Council's draft resolutions. Why are some Council members therefore so determined to impose harmful measures — measures that the International Court of Justice refused to take? They all know the answers.

A ceasefire is the epitome of a kick-the-can-down-the-road policy. A ceasefire today means immunity for baby-killers and rapists. It is an easy way to make this problem an issue for another day. With a ceasefire in place, Hamas would regroup and rearm, and their next attempted genocide against Israelis would only be a question of when — not if. Hamas has sworn publicly to commit the atrocities of 7 October again and again until Israel is annihilated. So then why is the Council, which is charged with ensuring security, so fixated on aiding those monsters to stay in power?

Just yesterday, Israel exposed footage proving that Shiri Bibas and her two children, 4-year-old Ariel and 1-year-old Kfir, were taken to Gaza alive. A 4-year-old and a baby, among others, were taken hostage by Hamas, yet most Council members choose to support a ceasefire — why do they want to leave them in Gaza? Do they not see how immoral that is and what kind of precedent it would set for terrorists around the globe? Did they think about babies' fear when they voted on draft resolution S/2024/173 — a draft resolution that would ensure that Kfir, along with 133 other hostages, remain in dark terror tunnels?

Did Council members think about Noa Argamani? Noa's look of sheer horror as she was violently separated from her boyfriend, Avinatan Or, and taken to Gaza on the back of a motorbike has become a symbol of the hostages' plight. In the heart-wrenching video, one can hear Noa screaming and pleading with the terrorists not to abduct her. Noa's mother, Liora, born Li Chonghong, a Chinese-Israeli citizen originally from Wuhan, is terminally ill with stage-4 brain cancer. All she asks is that she can hug Noa, her only daughter, one last time before she succumbs to her illness. I therefore urge my Chinese colleague, in the name of Liora, Li Chonghong, rather than pushing for a harmful ceasefire, which will keep Noa in Gaza, to pressure Hamas to release Noa so that her mother can see Noa one last time before her death.

Jihadists around the globe see that the body mandated to uphold international security is willing to allow Hamas murderers and rapists to continue their reign of terror. Council members' calls for a ceasefire empower Hamas, giving them hope to stay in power. That does not ensure security, but prevents it. They may truly want a ceasefire — but Israel, too, wants a ceasefire. Our children — not theirs — are the ones falling in battle against bloodthirsty terrorists. If Hamas survives, it will be our children that Hamas will murder in cold blood again. Israel seeks a ceasefire, but there is only one formula that we are willing to accept: all our hostages must be released, and Hamas must turn themselves in.

The Algerian draft resolution not only empowers jihadists by calling for a ceasefire, but it also again fails to condemn Hamas for their heinous crimes. Not condemning Hamas's atrocities has now become a tradition here. It is tragic. Hamas Nazis invaded Israel, deliberately murdering families, raping women and girls and destroying everything they could get their hands on. They are brutal terrorists who took pride in their barbarism, yet not even once since 7 October has the Council or any United Nations body condemned Hamas for their violence. One day — some have mentioned history here — when historians study the reasons that the United Nations lost its standing and influence, the inability of the Organization to condemn terrorists who slaughter children will be one of the driving factors. Mark my words.

But the effects of the Security Council's decisions spread much further beyond this Chamber. If the Council is incapable of condemning Hamas, United Nations officials feel as if they have further legitimacy to whitewash Hamas. Mere days ago, Under-Secretary-General Griffiths stated that Hamas is not a terrorist group but a political movement. Is the intentional, brutal murder of hundreds of civilians not terror? Is the systematic rape of women not terror? Is beheading and burning children alive not terror?

We all know that Hamas is a terrorist organization. Yet by staying silent in the face of Hamas's crimes and not condemning them, Council members allow such lies to be perpetuated. Their politicized decision of silence promotes the falsehoods that Hamas can be reasoned with and that they are not the bloodthirsty terrorists that they are. And that is the stance that the United Nations adopts and promotes. But as a Council, they must condemn Hamas and their atrocities in order to

rid this institution of its shame. They must do it for the sake of those butchered, for the sake of the hostages and for the sake of morality and truth. It is in their hands.

Some of my colleagues here have approached me and asked me why Israel is so critical of the United Nations and its agencies. The recent events over the past weeks have hopefully made it clearer to them. One week ago, Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese libellously stated that the victims of 7 October were not murdered for their identity, but in response to Israel's so-called oppression. That is victim-blaming and a clear justification of terror.

But for some United Nations employees, even poisonous words are not enough. Dozens of employees of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) took active roles in the 7 October massacre, while many more praised the savage attack. Faisal Ali Mussalem Al-Naami, an UNRWA social worker, stuffed the body of Jonathan Samerano into a truck to be taken to Gaza. A Hamas data centre was located directly underneath UNRWA headquarters in Gaza, connected to UNRWA's power supply, and terror tunnels have been found running underneath various UNRWA facilities and schools — everywhere. Of UNRWA's 1,300 employees in Gaza, 12 per cent are members of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and at least 236 of them are active terrorists in the armed wings of those organizations.

UNRWA has been proven to be an instrumental part of Hamas's terror machine, which makes UNRWA itself a terrorist organization. Yet rather than take responsibility for the weaponization of that murderous United Nations Agency, Commissioner-General Lazzarini has chosen to say that he had no knowledge of Hamas's hold on his own Agency. That is blatantly false. Israel exposed terror tunnels under UNRWA schools and supplied evidence of Hamas's exploitation of the Agency — you can see that on my Twitter account. I personally sent letters to the UNRWA Commissioner-General and the Secretary-General. We have implored them for years to carry out a comprehensive search of all UNRWA facilities in Gaza. Yet not only did they refuse, but they chose to bury their heads in the sand and ignore the reality. That is why every report, statement or a number provided by the United Nations cannot be trusted. In Gaza, Hamas is the United Nations and the United Nations is Hamas.

This ostrich tactic of burying one's head in the sand is the *modus operandi* among the United Nations leadership. Yet no matter how deep one's head is buried, it will not change the reality on the ground. A terrorist is a terrorist. A terror organization is a terror organization. And a law-abiding liberal democracy will remain as such, even if here at the United Nations, for political reasons, light becomes darkness and day becomes night.

That is also the case with the escalating situation on Israel's northern border with Lebanon. For years — and Council members heard it in this Chamber — Israel has called for the Council to impose the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). Yet for years, the United Nations has opted for the ostrich tactic. Tragically, that is no longer a situation that can be ignored. The clock is ticking. It is not a matter of years, but weeks, before Israel will be forced to implement resolution 1701 (2006) itself.

Just yesterday, a Hizbullah drone was downed while flying over the Sea of Galilee, deep inside Israel. More than 2,000 Hizbullah missiles and rockets have rained down on the cities of Israel's north. And nearly 100,000 residents of northern Israel have been displaced owing to the threat posed by Hizbullah with, of course, Iran's backing.

A ceasefire in Gaza is not only destructive for Israel and the Palestinians, but it also ensures that a blind eye is turned to what is unfolding in the rest of the region — be it the Houthis's relentless attacks on maritime trade, pro-Iran militias targeting even American service members or Hizbullah's constant bombardment of Israel's north. The clock is ticking. And sadly, we will be forced to take decisive action. Terror will never be tolerated.

The Council must put politics aside for the sake of its mandate. A ceasefire that allows Hamas to remain in power means ensured death and destruction. Ignoring Hamas's atrocities and not condemning them means empowering terrorists worldwide. And focusing only on Gaza while looking away from the terror aggression across the region will lead to a future than none of us seek. The Security Council must fulfil its mandate. It must side with Israel against the forces of evil. And it must face reality. Reality is not found when one's head is buried in the sand.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank you, Madam President, and your friendly country on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. It is my honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Arab countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), namely, my country, the State of Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Bahrain. We align ourselves with the statement to be delivered shortly on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

Today's meeting is being held under extremely difficult circumstances. The situation in the Gaza Strip has been the worst humanitarian disaster the world has seen. According to United Nations reports, there is no safe place in the Gaza Strip. Almost all residents of the Gaza Strip, numbering more than 2 million people, are now refugees and facing starvation. As the aggression by the Israeli occupation has been ongoing for nearly five months against our Palestinian brethren, the GCC States have strongly cautioned against the increased frequency of military attacks against the Strip and the increase in the number of victims — reaching nearly 100,000 people, the majority of whom are women and children — who have been killed, wounded or are under rubble.

In that context, we note statements by United Nations officials who emphasized that they have never seen a situation such as that in Gaza, which led the Secretary-General address the Council pursuant to Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations. He has warned against the dangers resulting from the collapse of the humanitarian system and of public order in Gaza. He also called for an urgent humanitarian ceasefire. In that regard, we stress the need to fully implement resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023).

The GCC States condemn in the strongest terms the Israeli threats about launching a military operation against the city of Rafah, in southern Gaza Strip. We caution that those threats portend an increase in the level of violence and destabilization in the region. We also strongly condemn the attempts at forced displacement of civilians, and we firmly reject any military operation in the city of Rafah. We caution against a new humanitarian disaster there, as it has become the last refuge for hundreds of thousands of displaced persons in the Gaza Strip.

In that context, the GCC States profoundly regret the suspension by some donor countries of financing for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), specifically in the light of the dangerous humanitarian situation in Gaza, where 5 million Palestinian people depend on the Agency, in particular in the Strip. In that regard, we align ourselves with the Secretary-General in his call for countries that have halted their support to UNRWA to reconsider their decision and reinstate their financing for the Agency so as to avoid a deeper humanitarian disaster in Gaza. Our States reiterate their steadfast position in support of the just Palestinian question and the legitimate rights of the fraternal Palestinian people to establish their independent State along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The GCC States express their appreciation regarding the ongoing negotiations on a framework agreement for a new humanitarian truce in the Gaza Strip being facilitated by my country, the State of Qatar, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the United States. The aim is to free hostages and detainees, to guarantee greater deliveries of humanitarian and relief assistance to the Gaza Strip and to protect civilians.

The GCC States have profound regret regarding the failure of the Council today to adopt a draft resolution (S/2024/173) submitted by Algeria and supported by the Arab Group as well as by the majority of Council members. That draft resolution is a humanitarian one and in line with international humanitarian law. In that regard, we wish to note that our States will continue our efforts, alongside partners at all levels, to guarantee the achievement of an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in the Gaza Strip in order to stop the bloodletting of our Palestinian brethren in the Strip, guarantee the delivery of more humanitarian and relief assistance and to protect civilians.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, and your country, Guyana, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to thank you convening this meeting. We thank Algeria, the Arab member of the

Council, for taking the initiative to submit the draft resolution (S/2024/173) and for its efforts throughout the negotiations to preserve the unity of the Security Council and reach consensus on the call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

The ceasefire is the most urgent measure given the catastrophic situation in the Gaza Strip and the terrible humanitarian suffering of the Palestinian people, as a result of the occupation authorities' continued aggression, war crimes and genocide committed against the Palestinian people, which continue unabated. Moreover, the occupation authorities continue to impose collective punishment and prevent the delivery of humanitarian and medical assistance, food, water, fuel and all life-saving means to Gaza.

The Arab Group thanks the Council Member States that positively contributed and constructively participated in the negotiations on the draft resolution and voted in favour of its adoption. At the same time, we regret that the Council failed to adopt the draft resolution and to shoulder its legal and moral responsibility as the main organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. We reaffirm, as have many countries around the world, members of the Security Council, and humanitarian and international organizations — the need for an immediate ceasefire and to prevent the occupation authorities from carrying out their plan, which targets more than 1.5 million Palestinians in Rafah, so as to prevent yet another forced displacement of Palestinians and the emptying of Palestinian land from its population.

The Arab Group considers that it is unacceptable by any standard for the Security Council to continue to work on the basis of political calculations and narrow interests, while daily attacks on the Palestinian people continue, deepening their suffering, and thousands are killed, including children, women, the elderly and sick people.

The Security Council failed today to speak with one voice and to put the principles of international law, international humanitarian law and the right to life first. That sends the wrong message once again to the occupying Power and gives it carte blanche to continue its crimes, while disregarding international legitimacy and considering itself above the law and beyond accountability.] It also deepens the crisis of trust in the credibility of this important United Nations organ.

In that context, the Arab Group reiterates its rejection of the policies that are aligned with the plans of the occupation authorities and the effort to safeguard those at the expense of thousands of Palestinians, who are dying and whose land is stolen by means of displacement and settlement schemes.

The Arab Group reaffirms its rejection for the double standards that have contributed to the protracted Palestinian question and prevented the implementation of any of the relevant resolutions, with the attendant massacres, abuse against the Palestinian people and violations of their rights. The Group demands that the same standards and level of commitment be applied to the handling of all issues and situations. The Arab Group also calls upon the international community and the Security Council to ensure the protection of Palestinians and to accelerate the unhindered entry and delivery of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, in accordance with resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023). It also reiterates its full support for the efforts of the United Nations Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, and her efforts to respond to the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.

The ongoing efforts to reach a framework agreement for the exchange of prisoners and detainees and to establish a truce are not contrary to the demand for an immediate ceasefire, which can only help to facilitate such endeavours. There is no explanation for the insistence on refusing to adopt the draft resolution on that demand and to enable the international community and the Security Council to speak with one voice — except for the occupation Government's efforts to continue its military operations and to carry out its plot to displace the Palestinians from their land.

In that regard — and faced with that approach, which aims to neutralize the Security Council and prevent it from shouldering its responsibility pursuant to the Charter in such catastrophic situations — we wonder what the Council's role is, when it will be allowed to play that supposed role and how many innocent lives must be lost before that can happen. Is it not enough to kill more than 28,000 people, injure approximately 70,000 and displace more than 1.3 million, destroy all infrastructure, housing, hospitals, schools, places of worship and United Nations offices, and kill dozens of United Nations and humanitarian staff and journalists?

The Arab Group also condemns in the strongest terms the occupying Power's repeated acts of aggression against the territories of Syria and Lebanon, its violation of their sovereignty and its killing of innocent civilians, acts that undermine security, peace and stability in the region and the world. The Arab Group will continue to take action at all levels and in all forums to ensure that the international community shoulders its responsibility, free of selectivity and political calculations, to compel the occupation authorities to comply with international law and international humanitarian law and to put an end to their schemes and grave violations against the Palestinian people.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): This morning, we have once again witnessed a blatant example of double standards, as the United States delegation obstructed — for the third time — the attempt to adopt a Security Council draft resolution to establish a ceasefire in Gaza. That was in spite of the fact that 13 members of the Security Council voted in favour of the Algerian draft resolution (S/2024/173), which was submitted with the full support of the Arab and Islamic groups at the United Nations.

As grateful as we are to Algeria, the Arab member of the Security Council, for introducing the draft resolution, and to all those who voted in favour of it, the delegation of Egypt expresses greater frustration and disappointment at the continued obstruction on the part of the United States of ceasefire efforts by the main organ entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security.

Where does the United States voting stand vis-à-vis the human suffering that has, after 20 weeks of war on Gaza, become catastrophic? How can we be called a rules-based international community when our pleas for those rules to be applied fall on deaf ears? Did the Secretary-General's invocation of Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations not reveal the action required of the Security Council? Does the decision of the International Court of Justice, which requested specific action, not make clear the immediate need for a ceasefire? Are the reports of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East about the catastrophic nature of the current humanitarian

situation in Gaza, particularly on the border with Egypt in Rafah, not sufficient to convince the United States delegation to vote in favour of a ceasefire after 140 days into the conflict and more than 30,000 people, mostly women and children, having lost their lives as a result of the unjust war in Gaza?

Egypt was the first Arab country to make peace with Israel, and Egypt is the country that is most eager to pursue the stability of the Middle East. While the Security Council continues to fail to stop the war, Egypt will continue to bear the brunt of the political, security and humanitarian burden of the crisis. However, Egypt is determined to strive arduously and continuously at all levels to stop the bloodshed, to halt the destructive war and to restore a political horizon in order to realize the Palestinian and Israeli peoples' hopes for security and stability, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, including the establishment of an independent Palestinian State along the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Egypt is negotiating and mediating with the utmost seriousness — in coordination with the United States, Qatar, Israel and the Palestinian side — to expedite the release of detainees, hostages and Palestinian prisoners and to hasten the delivery of humanitarian aid to the greatest extent possible in order to put an end to the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza, to save our Palestinian brothers from the unjust siege imposed on them by the Israeli occupation authorities and to oppose all Israeli attempts to impose the forced displacement of the Palestinian people, with the aim of liquidating their noble cause.

Egypt calls on the Security Council and all responsible international Powers to salvage the peace option by immediately enforcing a ceasefire. Doing so will not hinder ongoing mediation efforts, but will instead create conditions conducive to their success. Let us negotiate and mediate the flow of humanitarian aid, restore calm and heal the wounds of the injured — especially orphaned children and bereaved mothers — instead of negotiating amid the destruction and wreckage left by the devastating Israeli war machine.

Egypt's call to all Council members is clear and simple: ceasefire now. I hope that no party will ever again fail to comprehend that noble and direct message, whose sole aim is to protect civilians in a manner devoid of political calculations. Egypt once again warns of the

catastrophic dangers facing our Palestinian brethren as a result of the announced Israeli plans to storm the city of Rafah. Egypt also warns that the regional situation will continue to deteriorate should this destructive war continue.

The President: The representative of China has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Sun Zhiqiang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Earlier we heard the representative of Israel put a question to the Chinese delegation. In response, we would like to say that every life is precious and that every life has the right to be protected.

Regarding the representative of Israel's reference to the Israeli citizen being detained, Noa, her mother was once a national of China. Recently, our diplomats here in New York met with Noa's friends at the request of the Permanent Mission of Israel. Like her friends and

family, we hope that Noa can return home soon. In fact, China has never stopped calling for the prompt release of all those who are detained.

Therefore, we hope that, with the mediation of Egypt and Qatar, there will be progress on Israel's negotiation with Hamas. As we have repeatedly emphasized, the collective punishment of Palestinian civilians is not the right response. That will only be counterproductive. The only way towards peace between the two countries is to implement the two-State solution in order to avoid a greater disaster. The pressing priority is an immediate ceasefire. We hope that Israel will listen to the overwhelming voice of the international community and, after listening to the voices of Council members and other countries, it should make the right judgement call rather than changing the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.