



Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

9586th meeting
Monday, 25 March 2024, 10 a.m.
New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Yamazaki	(Japan)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
	China	Mr. Zhang Jun
	Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	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 10.25 a.m.

Expression of sympathy

The President: At the outset of the meeting, I should like, at the request of the delegation of the Russian Federation and on behalf of the members of the Security Council, to ask that all those present now stand and join in observing a minute of silence to present its condolences and sympathy to the Government and the people of Russia and in the memory of the victims of the heinous and cowardly terrorist act at a concert hall, in the Moscow region of the Russian Federation, on 22 March.

I now invite everyone to stand and observe a minute of silence.

The members of the Security Council observed a minute of silence.

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 Israel and Yemen to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in this meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and 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/2024/254, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Algeria, Ecuador, Guyana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia and Switzerland.

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. Afonso (Mozambique): I have the honour to introduce this draft resolution (S/2024/254) on behalf of the 10 elected members of the Security Council (E10), namely, Algeria, Ecuador, Guyana, Japan, Malta, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland and my own country, Mozambique.

We wish to commend the presidency of Japan for convening this meeting in order to take action on this important draft resolution on the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. We express our deep appreciation to all members of the Council for their efforts and input on this draft resolution and towards ending the catastrophic situation in the Gaza Strip.

The situation in Gaza is a matter of grave concern to the entire international community. Indeed, the escalation of the conflict in the Gaza Strip and its catastrophic consequences are clear threats to international peace and security. In that context, the E10 felt compelled to submit the draft resolution before the Council. The 15 members of the Council, individually and collectively, have a mandate under the Charter of the United Nations to work for the maintenance of international peace and security, and their actions have an impact on the entire international community. That is the strong conviction that led to the drafting of the text that we are considering this morning.

The Council has been consistently unanimous in its agreement on the obligation of the parties to the conflict to respect international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The E10 has always supported the call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza as a fundamental step. For that reason, and out of respect for the holy month of Ramadan, we submitted the present draft resolution, which demands an immediate ceasefire during this sacred period, leading to a permanent and sustainable ceasefire. At the same time, the draft resolution demands the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and emphasizes that humanitarian access must be allowed in order to address their medical and other humanitarian needs. Those have been among our key demands for weeks. The draft resolution further demands that the parties comply with their obligations under international law, as we said before, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The draft resolution also emphasizes the need for the parties to abide by the pertinent resolutions adopted by the Council, including resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023).

The E10 adopted a consultative approach during the negotiation process for this text. We consulted extensively and in good faith with all members of the Council in a frank, open and flexible manner, with the aim of achieving a text that addresses the situation in Gaza. The adoption of this draft resolution will certainly be another important step that the Council can build upon to comprehensively address the crisis in Gaza. Given the utmost urgency of the situation, we call upon each and every member of the Council to vote in favour of this draft resolution. While this draft resolution is crucial, it is also essential that we continue working towards a comprehensive ceasefire and a lasting peace in the region.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are extremely stunned and disappointed about the way the work was done on draft resolution S/2024/254 over the past 24 hours. It was a little more than an hour before the meeting when we learned that the word “permanent” in operative paragraph 1, relating to the ceasefire, was to be replaced by weaker language. That is unacceptable. We all received instructions to vote on the text that contained the word “permanent”, and we believe that this is of fundamental importance. The remaining wording leaves too much room for interpretation, which could allow Israel to resume its military operation in the Gaza Strip at any time after the expiry of the ceasefire, which we hope will be established today.

In order to avoid that scenario, we would like to make an oral amendment to the text and re-insert the word “permanent” into operative paragraph 1, to make it read as initially proposed, namely,

(*spoke in English*)

“Demands an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan respected by all parties leading to a permanent sustainable ceasefire, and also demands the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, as well as ensuring humanitarian access to address their medical and other humanitarian needs, and further demands that the parties comply with their obligations under international law in relation to all persons they detain”.

The President: Members of the Council have before them a proposed oral amendment, submitted by the Russian Federation, to the text of the draft resolution contained in document S/2024/254, submitted by Algeria, Ecuador, Guyana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia and Switzerland.

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

“when an amendment adds to or deletes from the text of a motion or draft resolution, that amendment shall be voted on first.”

Accordingly, I intend to put the proposed oral amendment to the vote first.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Algeria, China, Russian Federation

Against:

United States of America

Abstaining:

Ecuador, France, Guyana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The President: The proposed oral amendment received 3 votes in favour, 1 against and 11 abstentions. The proposed oral amendment has not been adopted, having failed to obtain the required number of votes.

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, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Against:

None

Abstaining:

United States of America

The President: The draft resolution received 14 votes in favour, none against and one abstention. The draft resolution has been adopted as resolution 2728 (2024).

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

Mr. Bendjama (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank all Council members for their flexibility and constructive work, which has allowed us to adopt

long-awaited resolution 2728 (2024), a resolution that calls for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip in order to put an end to the massacres that, unfortunately, have persisted for more than five months now. During those five months, the Palestinian people have been subjected to every form of torment and suffering. The bloodbath has continued for far too long in hideous dimensions. We must put an end to the bloodbath before it is too late.

Finally, the Security Council is shouldering its responsibilities as the primary organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security and is responding to the calls of peoples and the international community, as repeatedly called for by Secretary-General António Guterres. We reiterate our support to the Secretary-General for his noble position and for advocating the truth, despite the heinous campaigns launched against him.

When we voted on draft resolution S/2024/173, submitted by Algeria last month, we promised that we would spare no effort to ensure that the Security Council assumed its full responsibilities. We also promised that we would come back to knock once again on the doors of the Security Council, as we did today, alongside all elected members of the Council, to convey a clear message to the Palestinian people that the entire international community feels their suffering and has not abandoned them.

The adoption of today's resolution 2728 (2024) is only the beginning of efforts to meet the aspirations of the Palestinian people. We look forward to the Israeli occupier's compliance with the resolution and immediate cessation of killing without conditions, thereby ending the suffering of the Palestinian people. It is the responsibility of the Security Council to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the resolution.

In conclusion, I reaffirm that Algeria will soon return to address the Security Council once again, under the directives of Mr. Abdelmadjid Tebboune, President of the Republic of Algeria, to ensure that the State of Palestine assumes its natural place as a full-fledged and sovereign member of the United Nations.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): At the top, I want to express my deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of last week's terrorist attack in Moscow. We condemn terrorism in all its forms and stand in solidarity with the Russian people in grieving the loss of life from that horrific event.

Today, the Council spoke out in support of the ongoing diplomatic efforts, led by the United States, Qatar and Egypt, to bring about an immediate and sustainable ceasefire, secure the immediate release of all hostages and help to alleviate the tremendous suffering of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, who are in dire need of protection and life-saving humanitarian assistance. The United States fully supports those critical objectives. In fact, they were the foundation of draft resolution S/2024/239, which we put forward last week, a draft resolution that Russia and China vetoed.

But colleagues, the United States' support for those objectives is not simply rhetorical. We are working around the clock to make them real, on the ground, through diplomacy, because we know that it is only through diplomacy that we can push this agenda forward. We are getting closer to a deal for an immediate ceasefire with the release of all hostages, but we are not there yet.

Now, let us be clear: a ceasefire could have come about months ago if Hamas had been willing to release hostages. Instead Hamas continues to stand in the way of peace, to throw up roadblocks, to cower in tunnels beneath Gaza's cities and under civilian infrastructure, and to hide among the civilian population.

So today, my request to members of the Council and to Member States in every region of the world is this: speak out and demand unequivocally that Hamas accept the deal on the table.

Now, I hope I am wrong — I really do — but I do not expect that from Russia and China, especially because they still cannot bring themselves to condemn Hamas's terrorist attacks on 7 October 2023. Just last week, Russia and China vetoed draft resolution S/2024/239, which condemned that horrific attack, a draft resolution the vast majority of the Council supported. They have shown time and time again that they are not actually interested in advancing a durable peace through diplomatic efforts, nor for all their rhetoric are they interested in making any meaningful contributions to humanitarian efforts. Instead, they are using the devastating conflict as a political cudgel to try to divide the Council at a time when we need to come together. It is deeply cynical, and we should all see through it.

We appreciated the willingness of members of the Council to take some of our edits and improve on resolution 2728 (2024). Still, certain key edits were

ignored, including our request to add a condemnation of Hamas. And we did not agree with everything in the resolution. For that reason, we were unfortunately not able to vote yes.

However, as I said before, we fully support some of the critical objectives in this non-binding resolution. And we believe it was important for the Council to speak out and make clear that any ceasefire must come with the release of all hostages. Indeed, as I have said before, the only path to a durable end to the conflict is the release of all hostages.

Critically, a ceasefire and the release of hostages will allow much more humanitarian aid to get into Gaza at a time when famine is looming large and provide an opportunity to work towards a sustainable cessation of hostilities; towards a future where Hamas can no longer threaten Israel and never repeat 7 October 2023 and no longer control Gaza and use civilians as shields; towards a future where Palestinians and Israelis live side by side in peace, in two democratic States of their own. Something that will never happen with Hamas — a terrorist organization dedicated to the destruction of Israel and the killing of Jews and a terrorist organization this body still fails to condemn — controlling Gaza.

We meet during the holy month of Ramadan. That should be a season of peace for Muslim communities around the world, just as 7 October 2023, Simchat Torah, should have been a day of peace for Jewish communities. The resolution rightly acknowledges that, during the month of Ramadan, we must recommit to peace. Hamas can do that by accepting the deal on the table. A ceasefire can begin immediately with the release of the first hostage. And so, we must put pressure on Hamas to do just that. That is the only path to securing a ceasefire and the release of hostages, as we have all called for today. That is what the resolution means, a ceasefire of any duration must come with the release of hostages. That is the only path.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): Today is an important day. Most of all, we hope it will signal an important day for the people of the Middle East, a day that will help silence the guns, stop the killing, free the hostages and bring some calm to and clear the sky over Gaza, and the day that marks the beginning of the end of pain and suffering of civilians. It is a significant day for the elected members. We found our voice, of a unifying force, inside the Council. That is the reason why we are on the Council. We showed a leadership for peace. And

it is a good day for the whole Council as we aligned our efforts and decision with the calls coming from the General Assembly and the Secretary-General, from the humanitarian organizations and from the world public. We demonstrated that we can find unity for peace — a small step in rebuilding trust in the Council. Today's resolution (resolution 2728 (2024)) is just the beginning. We will need more of that unity for Gaza as well as for many other conflicts, and Slovenia is ready.

I do not need but I wish to thank my colleagues, the elected members, as we went through the process together. It is Slovenia's third month on the Council, and we are looking forward to many more joint ventures together in search of peace. I wanted to thank the permanent members for giving us a chance, for having trust in the power of the elected 10 and for being patient during negotiations. We delivered the strongest signal thus far: we demand an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan leading to a lasting, sustainable ceasefire. It is a call we have all been desperate to hear from the Council.

A short and focused resolution is a firm sign from the Council that the conflict must stop. It offers an opportunity for peace for Palestinians and an opportunity for diplomatic efforts, including those of Egypt, Qatar and the United States, to continue. We express our appreciation for the commitment of the Secretary-General, United Nations staff members on the ground and humanitarian coordinators, and for the leadership of different United Nations agencies and humanitarian and health organizations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

We recall the binding nature of Security Council resolutions and call for swift implementation of this clear resolution, in particular with regards to the ceasefire, the unconditional release of hostages and the urgent need for expansion of the flow of humanitarian aid. We also reiterate our call for full respect of international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): Today's adoption of the resolution proposed by the elected members of the Security Council (E10), including the Republic of Korea (resolution 2728 (2024)), has a historic meaning in that it is the very first resolution adopted by the Council that demands a ceasefire in Gaza, after numerous attempts by the Council and consistent

appeals by the Secretary-General, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and others, amid rising death tolls. It is also significant that it is the first ever draft resolution introduced by the E10 and adopted on a Security Council regional agenda item.

As one of the E10, the Republic of Korea is pleased by today's adoption of the resolution, and commends the dedicated efforts of all E10 colleagues, including Mozambique, the E10 coordinator, Algeria, representing the views of the Arab world, and Japan, the President of the Council, in the process of drafting and negotiating the resolution.

In addition, we appreciate the cooperation of the five permanent members, in particular the United States for its sincere and utmost coordination with the E10 in the spirit of compromise.

In order for today's resolution to have concrete significance, beyond the internal politics of the Security Council, it must have a tangible impact on the situation in the Gaza Strip by saving the lives of innocent civilians and easing the humanitarian crisis. The situation on the ground in Gaza must be different before and after the resolution. That will only be possible when both Israel and Hamas respect and faithfully implement the resolution. Even though it is not explicitly coercive under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, the parties to the conflict must bear in mind that the resolution reflects the consensus of the international community, one forged through active discussion in the Security Council and the General Assembly for more than five months.

The most important thing is implementing the ceasefire starting right now, as defined in the resolution. Violence and firing must cease immediately. Hostages taken by Hamas and other groups must be returned to their families right away. Barriers to the provision of humanitarian assistance must be lifted. The entire international community must also actively cooperate to save civilian lives and overcome acute food insecurity through humanitarian aid at scale, restore basic public order, and improve Gaza's fundamental public services, including health and sanitation. And, based on those achievements, preparations for redoubled political and diplomatic dialogue to resolve the Palestinian question in the long term must commence, step by step. All parties will have to take a step back and respond to the global call to participate in the cause of restoring peace and humanity.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): At the outset I would like to express our condolences to the Russian Federation for the atrocious terrorist attack of last week. We condemn all terrorism in all its forms.

Malta was proud to co-pen the resolution we have just adopted (resolution 2728 (2024)), which calls for a ceasefire for the month of Ramadan, leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire. With this resolution, the Security Council has clearly spoken out on the urgent and pressing need to stop the fighting. That is critical to alleviate the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. The resolution must now be immediately and unconditionally implemented by all parties. The fighting needs to stop without further delays. All hostages must be safely released.

On this occasion, we also express our appreciation and support for the ongoing negotiations by Egypt, Qatar and the United States. We sincerely hope that those diplomatic efforts can lead to tangible results in the coming days.

Meanwhile, humanitarian access to the Gaza Strip is of critical importance if we are to avert the risk of famine. There is an urgent need to expand the flow of humanitarian assistance and to lift all barriers preventing the necessary humanitarian assistance, as requested by this resolution.

In conclusion, a sustainable ceasefire must also be accompanied by political urgency to build a durable foundation for peace. Malta reaffirms its commitment to a just and comprehensive resolution of the conflict based on a two-State solution along the pre-1967 borders — one that addresses the legitimate aspirations of both sides, with Jerusalem as the future capital of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions and internationally agreed parameters.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): France welcomes today's adoption of resolution 2728 (2024).

More than five months after the beginning of the crisis in Gaza, triggered by the terrorist attack carried out by Hamas, it was high time for the Security Council to finally act. It was high time for it to establish a ceasefire. It was high time for it to demand the release of hostages. It was high time for it to call for comprehensive humanitarian access and large-scale assistance as famine rages in Gaza.

The adoption of this resolution demonstrates that the Security Council can still act when all of its members make the necessary effort to discharge their mandate. In that connection, I wish to personally commend the Permanent Representative of the United States. The

Security Council's silence on Gaza was becoming deafening. It is high time now for the Council to finally contribute to finding a solution to this crisis.

The crisis is not over, alas, and our Council will have to remain mobilized and immediately get back to work. After Ramadan, which ends in two weeks, it will have to establish a permanent ceasefire. It will need to work towards the recovery and stabilization of Gaza.

Finally and above all, the Security Council will have to get a political process back on track so as to bring about a two-State solution, the only one able to ensure peace. The Council cannot replace the parties, of course, but its role will be pivotal. In that connection, France will shoulder its responsibilities and will propose an initiative in the Security Council in the coming days.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland voted in favour of resolution 2728 (2024) and welcomes its adoption by the Security Council. Finally, there is cause for hope.

This vote should mark a return to greater humanity in the Middle East conflict. "Human dignity and decency must define us as a global community". That is how the Secretary-General, whom I wish to thank alongside all humanitarian stakeholders, underlined that necessity yesterday, at the Rafah crossing.

Today's vote demonstrates the importance and weight that elected members can have when the Council's blockages disrupt the fulfilment of its mandate. Switzerland worked tirelessly with all Council members, which I thank, to get this resolution adopted, always in a spirit of solidarity and constructiveness, mindful of the mandate entrusted to us by the General Assembly when it elected us and of our own priority — to protect civilians.

We had a clear common objective: to send the parties to the conflict a clear and unequivocal request for an immediate ceasefire leading to a sustainable ceasefire. It was high time for the Council to finally reach consensus on that demand.

An immediate ceasefire is a priority step, but it is only the first step, given the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza. For almost six months, civilians — starting with children and hundreds of thousands of displaced persons — have been prey to daily bombardments, with the risk of famine and epidemics, instead of going to school or work without danger.

That must stop immediately. The implementation of this resolution must help to provide the civilian population with the humanitarian aid it needs through every possible means of access, as well as to provide medical care, restore medical infrastructure, relieve the burden on medical personnel and enable them to carry out their mission without danger.

The resolution also makes a clear demand for the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages, who must be allowed to return home safe and sound, along with their families. Their capture during the acts of terror of 7 October 2023, which Switzerland strongly condemned, violated international law.

Today's outcome is a clear call to all parties to cease hostilities and finally fully respect their obligations under international law, in particular international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

For the resolution we have just adopted to be effectively implemented, the immediate ceasefire must lead to a durable sustainable ceasefire, without delay. Similarly, given the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that a large-scale operation in Rafah would have on the civilian population and humanitarian operations, such an operation must be avoided.

The Secretary-General said yesterday at the Rafah crossing: "It is time to silence the guns." Hope is being able to see the light despite the darkness. With the adoption of the resolution today, it is now also high time to regain hope and to work together, relentlessly, towards the prospect of lasting peace and a two-State solution, where Israelis and Palestinians can live side by side in peace, security and dignity.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China voted in favour of resolution 2728 (2024), which was just now put to the vote. We thank Algeria, Mozambique and other elected Council members for their efforts.

On Friday, the Security Council voted on the other draft resolution on the situation in Gaza (S/2024/239), proposed by the United States. China, together with Algeria and Russia, voted against it (see S/PV.9584).

A comparison of the two texts shows the differences. The current text is unequivocal and correct in its direction, demanding an immediate ceasefire, while the previous one was evasive and ambiguous. The current text demands an unconditional ceasefire, while the previous one sets preconditions for a ceasefire. The current text reflects the general expectations of

the international community and enjoys the collective support of the Arab States, while the previous one was jointly rejected by the Arab States. The differences between the two texts boil down to only whether there should be an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and whether the collective punishment of the people of Gaza should be allowed to continue.

On this issue, like most members of the international community, China has been very clear from the outset. Whether we voted against the text on Friday or in favour of it today, our vote was based on our consistent position and propositions. After repeated vetoes of the Council's actions, the United States finally decided to stop obstructing the Council's demand for an immediate ceasefire.

Despite all this, the United States still tried to find all kinds of excuses to make accusations against China. The eyes of the international community are open and discerning. The accusations made by the United States are untenable. On the contrary, it is thanks to China and other countries concerned upholding principles and justice that we forced the United States to realize that it cannot continue to obstruct the efforts of the Council to take a decisive step in the right direction. In the end, justice will prevail.

Nearly six months after the outbreak of the Gaza conflict, more than 32,000 innocent civilians have lost their lives. For those who have already perished, the Council resolution today comes too late. But for the millions of people in Gaza who remain mired in an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe, this resolution, if fully and effectively implemented, could still bring long-awaited hope. Security Council resolutions are binding. We call on the parties concerned to fulfil their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and to take due action as required by the resolution. We expect the State with significant influence on the party concerned to play a positive role, including by using all necessary and effective means at its disposal to support the implementation of the resolution. To that end, all harm to civilians must cease immediately, and the offensive against Gaza must be stopped at once. A ceasefire during the month of Ramadan is only the first step that must serve as a basis leading to a lasting, sustainable ceasefire and the early return of the people of Gaza who were forced to flee their homes.

At the same time, the blockade of Gaza and the human-made barriers to access for humanitarian supplies must be lifted immediately to ensure that humanitarian supplies enter Gaza in sufficient quantities to expeditiously reach people in need in a safe and timely manner. We appreciate Secretary-General Guterres and humanitarian agencies for their efforts. Israel must fully cooperate to open Rafah and other land crossings. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is indispensable and irreplaceable for providing the people of Gaza with international humanitarian assistance. We urge all parties to fully restore funding to UNRWA as soon as possible. We categorically reject Israel's recent vicious campaign of attacks against UNRWA and the United Nations system as a whole. We welcome the efforts of Egypt, Qatar and the United States to promote the release of the hostages and expect the speedy release of all hostages and detainees and their early return home.

On the basis of the resolution adopted today, the Security Council must continue to follow closely the situation in Gaza, prepare for further actions when necessary and ensure the timely and full implementation of the resolution. China will continue to make unremitting efforts, together with all parties, to bring an early end to the fighting in Gaza, alleviate the humanitarian catastrophe and implement the two-State solution.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ecuador condemns the terrorist attacks in Moscow and expresses its solidarity with the victims' families and the Russian people.

The resolution that we have adopted today (resolution 2728 (2024)) was born as an idea formed by the elected members to prepare a text that would be acceptable to all members of the Security Council and would allow the Council to speak out in a timely manner on a humanitarian situation that continues to worsen. That is why the text is short and demands a ceasefire for the month of Ramadan that will make it possible to alleviate the situation for civilians, while demanding the immediate and unconditional release of all the hostages and deploring the violence against civilians and all acts of terrorism, including, implicitly, the abominable acts committed by Hamas in October 2023. The text also takes note of the strenuous efforts by Egypt, Qatar and the United States to reach an agreement between the parties to the conflict, which we hope will be successful.

Ecuador voted in favour of this resolution, and we are pleased that it has been adopted. We value the flexibility shown on this occasion by all members in the face of a situation as urgent as that in Gaza. We must all now ensure that this resolution is completely, effectively and immediately implemented.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): Guyana condemns the terrorist attack that occurred in Moscow last week and also extends its condolences to the Government and people of Russia.

Guyana is pleased that the Security Council has finally been able to adopt a resolution that demands an immediate ceasefire, albeit just for the month of Ramadan, leading to a lasting and sustainable ceasefire (resolution 2728 (2024)). After more than five months of a war of utter terror and destruction, a ceasefire is the difference between life and death for the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and others.

This demand comes at a significant time, as Palestinians are observing the holy month of Ramadan. Sadly, this year's Ramadan is different for Palestinians — fatally different. The observance began as people wept over the killing of their loved ones, while bombs and bullets continued to fall indiscriminately around them. A total of 17,000 children began Ramadan as orphans owing to this war, and 70,000 families began Ramadan without a home, all rubble. A further 290,000 homes have been severely damaged. Instead of being in their homes, the sacred place where they usually pray, break fast and commune with family and friends during this holy month, three quarters of the population of Gaza are internally displaced. Ramadan is also a time for families to join for nightly feasts and a time to share food and other blessings with the less fortunate. But for the people in Gaza, there is human-made starvation, and we are already seeing evidence of a human-made famine. All of that when there is food available, but it is being deliberately withheld.

Women and children are disproportionately affected. They represent the majority of those killed. Children and pregnant and lactating women are at higher risk of mortality due to lack of adequate nutrition. At the same time, the anguish of the families of the hostages held in Gaza continues to mount, with no clear prospect for the return of their loved ones. Palestinians experience the same anguish waiting for their relatives who are illegally detained in Israel to come home. Guyana emphasizes the demand for the

immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. We also demand the release of all Palestinians held in Israeli jails without trial.

The realities that the population of Gaza has been facing since 7 October 2023 have worsened with each passing day, as the occupying Power continues its atrocities. Given those realities and the consensus by the elected members of the Council that we must act, Guyana unhesitatingly collaborated with fellow elected members to put forward this resolution for an immediate ceasefire, the unconditional release of hostages and expanding humanitarian assistance. In that regard, we thank the coordinator of the elected 10 (E10), His Excellency Ambassador Pedro Comissário Afonso, and the delegation of Mozambique, for their leadership of this process. We also thank our E10 colleagues and our colleagues among the five permanent members for finally and collectively doing right by the Palestinian people.

It is long overdue, but it is still the right thing to have done, to stop the indignities against the Palestinian people. But this is just the beginning. The task before us now is to secure full compliance with this resolution and its predecessors, including 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023). In that regard, Guyana calls for full adherence to those resolutions.

Finally, the holy month of Ramadan will end in a mere 15 days. It is therefore essential that the Council and those with influence on the parties immediately redouble efforts to bring about the lasting and sustainable ceasefire this resolution calls for, as well as to secure the release of hostages and to massively scale up humanitarian assistance. Those are absolutely necessary to save lives, begin the reconstruction of Gaza and create a free State of Palestine with which Israel can peacefully coexist.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): Sierra Leone also expresses its deepest condolences to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation following the heinous terrorist attacks last week. Terrorism and acts of terrorism in all forms and manifestations are condemnable and unjustifiable.

The consideration and adoption of resolution 2728 (2024), co-penned by the 10 elected members of the Council (E10), including Sierra Leone, was born out of the need to address the current plight of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, especially during this holy month of Ramadan, a time traditionally filled with peace, love

and devotion among families and communities. We recognize the Palestinian people's collective struggle, facing hardship, loss, displacement and hunger each day. With that in mind, the E10-initiated resolution just adopted builds on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including the responsibility of the Security Council in the collective security scheme of the United Nations.

With the clear imperative to act as mandated, but also with the establishment of a political and moral imperative, the Security Council demands an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan, to be respected by all parties, leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire. The fighting must stop. The killing must stop. The suffering and collective punishment must end. The parties to the conflict are under the obligation to respect that demand by the Security Council. The parties to the conflict are urged to fully implement resolution 2728 (2024), along with resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023).

States with influence are urged to apply the necessary pressure on the parties to implement those resolutions. We continue to support the diplomatic efforts of Egypt, Qatar and the United States as complementary to the efforts and clear demands of the Security Council. The resolution just adopted also demands the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and humanitarian access to address their medical and other humanitarian needs, recalling that the taking of hostages is prohibited under international law.

The resolution just adopted further demands that the parties to the conflict comply with their obligations under international law in relation to all persons they detain. That is reinforced by the reiteration of the Council's demand for the parties to comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, to protect all civilians and to deplore attacks against civilians and civilian objects, violence and hostilities against civilians and all acts of terrorism.

Recognizing that half the population of the Gaza Strip is facing acute food shortages, with the imminent risk of famine, the emphasis on the urgent need to expand the flow of humanitarian assistance to civilians and to reinforce their protection throughout the Gaza Strip is most significant. That demand is further reinforced by the reiteration of the demand for the lifting of all barriers to the provision of humanitarian assistance, at scale. The focus on the humanitarian

needs of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip is aimed at restoring their human dignity. In a similar way, the resolution recognizes the dignity of the hostages and the detainees.

Sierra Leone abstained in the voting on the oral amendment proposed by the Russian Federation. While Sierra Leone notes the explanation by the Russian Federation, my country was compelled to ensure that the objective of demanding an immediate ceasefire is met. The conflict affects both Israeli and Palestinian civilians. Therefore, the demand for an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan must lead to a lasting sustainable ceasefire. It must lead to a permanent cessation of hostilities. In order for Israel and Palestine to live side by side in peace, security and stability, the ceasefire must pave the way for a two-State solution. We will continue in our resolve and support for the two-State solution, the only viable pathway to end the occupation and resolve this prolonged conflict.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I would like to start by offering the United Kingdom's sincere condolences for the terrorist attack at the Crocus City Hall, near Moscow. Our deepest sympathy goes to the families of the many victims.

The United Kingdom has long been calling for an immediate humanitarian pause leading to a sustainable ceasefire without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life, as the fastest way to get hostages out and aid in. That is what resolution 2728 (2024) calls for and why the United Kingdom voted in favour of the resolution.

Israel continues to reckon with the brutal horror of the 7 October 2023 attacks, and innocent hostages continue to be held by Hamas in Gaza. Israel has a right to defend itself and ensure that such an attack can never happen again. We regret that this resolution does not condemn the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October 2023. The United Kingdom condemns those attacks unequivocally.

This resolution sets out the urgent demand for the unconditional release of all hostages, and we welcome the ongoing diplomatic efforts by Egypt, Qatar and the United States to that end. The intense suffering of innocent Palestinian civilians in Gaza shows no sign of abating, and a humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding before our eyes.

The resolution sends a clear and united message on the need for international humanitarian law to be upheld, and for aid to be scaled up urgently, including

through the lifting of all barriers impeding its delivery. The Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister of the United Kingdom have reiterated those messages in our contacts with Prime Minister Netanyahu and other senior Israeli political leaders in recent weeks. We call for this resolution to be implemented immediately.

We need to focus on how we chart the way from an immediate humanitarian pause to a lasting, sustainable peace without a return to fighting. That means the formation of 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; Hamas no longer being in charge of Gaza and a political horizon that provides a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-State solution — Israel and Palestine, living side by side in security and peace.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia voted in favour of resolution 2728 (2024), submitted by the 10 non-permanent members of the Security Council. It is of fundamental importance that the Security Council is, for the first time, demanding that the parties observe an immediate ceasefire, even if it is limited to the month of Ramadan. Unfortunately, what will happen afterwards is still unclear, as the word “lasting” can be interpreted in different ways, and that is very telling. Those who are providing cover for Israel still want it to have free reign. We want to believe that this wording will be used in the interest of peace and not to advance Israel's inhumane operation against the Palestinians. The word “permanent” would have been more precise. We are disappointed that it was not adopted, but we still believe that it is fundamentally important to vote in favour of peace.

Nevertheless, the Council must continue to work on achieving a permanent ceasefire. We also note the demand in resolution 2728 (2024) for the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages.

On 22 March, there was another tragic day in the history of the Security Council, when through intrigue and blackmail, there was an attempt to lead the Council down the wrong path and force it to adopt draft resolution S/2024/239, which not only did not contain a direct demand or even a call for a ceasefire, but actually also gave, as the Permanent Representative of Algeria said that day, a license to continue killing Palestinian civilians (see S/PV.9584). Neither we nor our Algerian or Chinese colleagues could allow that.

From the first day of the escalation in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict zone, the Russian delegation has called on Council members to respond to the unprecedented surge in violence with a clear and unequivocal demand for an immediate permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, thereby fulfilling its mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Today, during the voting on our oral amendment, we saw once again the true face of our colleagues on the Security Council and saw for ourselves who genuinely wanted to put an end to, rather than put on hold, Israel's inhumane operation.

We would like to draw attention to the following. What happened today is a response to those who criticize the veto power of the permanent five members of the Council. If Russia and China had not exercised the veto on 22 March, instead of a short text capable of stopping the violence in Gaza, we would have had a harmful United States-proposed text that not only failed to demand a ceasefire, but actually gave Israel a license to continue its actions against the Palestinians, including in Rafah.

Before I conclude, I would like to remind the representatives of the United States, who time and again accuse the Council of failing to condemn the attack on Israel and blame Russia for not condemning the 7 October 2023 terrorist attack, that on 18 October, the United States delegation had the opportunity to adopt Brazilian draft resolution S/2023/773, which envisaged an unequivocal condemnation of the events of 7 October 2023 and humanitarian pauses. Moreover, that draft resolution contained language that Washington insisted on. I also recall that the delegation of Russia abstained in the voting on the Brazilian draft resolution, but the United States delegation vetoed it. Therefore, it has only itself to blame. We must not return to this point indefinitely, because in the six months since 7 October 2023, Israel has responded to the actions of Hamas, which have been repeatedly condemned by all members of the Security Council in their national capacities, with inhumane crimes and collective punishment of the Palestinian people, resulting in the deaths of more than 32,000 innocent civilians, most of them women and children. I ask Council members to just think about that.

I would also like to recall that Russia immediately and unequivocally condemned what happened on 7 October 2023, and there is no need to continue to speculate on that subject. We know first-hand what

international terrorism is. Unfortunately, we faced a monstrous manifestation of the brutal face of terrorism once again. On 22 March, a terrorist attack in Russia claimed the lives of at least 143 innocent citizens who were shot dead in cold blood. In the 1990s, we also faced manifestations of terrorism and consequently suffered heavy losses.

We appreciate the support of all those who expressed their condolences to us today.

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

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is catastrophic, even during the holy month of Ramadan, with high levels of food insecurity, the imminence of famine and nearly 1.5 million people sheltering in Rafah, struggling each day for their survival. We deeply mourn the tens of thousands of lives lost in the conflict, starting with the 7 October 2023 terrorist attack and thereafter on the ground.

In this vein, it is absolutely essential for the Security Council to demand an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan be respected by all parties, leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire in Gaza. We, all Council members, also need to demand the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, as well as ensure humanitarian access to address their medical and other humanitarian needs. That is why Japan, as one of the co-penholders, submitted resolution 2728 (2024). We welcome the fact that the Council was able to adopt a resolution proposed by the 10 elected members of the Security Council today.

In addition, we strongly support the ongoing diplomatic efforts, in particular the four-party talks, towards a ceasefire in connection with the release of all remaining hostages. We believe that a ceasefire could pave the path towards sustainable peace and stability in the region, which is what the international community voices to us every day. Japan will continue to work in the Council to achieve that path.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I wish to begin my statement by conveying my deepest condolences to the people and Government of the Russian Federation, and

my good friend Vassily Nebenzia, following the horrific terrorist attack in Moscow. We express our sympathy to the bereaved families and stand in solidarity with our Russian brothers and sisters in these difficult days.

It has taken six months, more than 100,000 Palestinians killed or maimed, 2 million displaced and famine for the Security Council to finally demand an immediate ceasefire, a vote for humankind to prevail, for life to prevail.

The Palestinians in Gaza pleaded and appealed, shouted, cried, cursed, prayed and defied the odds to survive time and time again and yet continue face death, destruction and displacement, deprivation and disease and an occupation-made famine. They are bombed, besieged and buried under the rubble of the houses they had built. They are killed in their homes, in the streets, in hospitals, in ambulances, in United Nations shelters and even in tents. Their ordeal must come to an end, and must come to an immediate end, now. As we speak, families prepare to break their fast, with missing loved ones around the table. They may well find nothing to put on their children's plate. In fact, there is no home sheltering them. There is no table to gather around, no plates to fill and no food to eat. They lost their homes, and they lost loved ones — some of them still trapped under the rubble. Imagine being a parent with some children under the rubble and others alive, feeling broken, but forced to go on for those who remain. Yesterday, Palestinian Christians celebrated Palm Sunday in besieged and destroyed churches that have become shelters in Gaza. They gathered, surrounded by death and praying for resurrection. Palestinian families cannot mourn or heal. They have to find a way to survive and to help what is left of their family to survive.

When such atrocities are being committed in broad daylight against defenceless civilians, including women and children, the right thing to do, the only thing to do — morally, legally and politically — is to put an end to it. There can be no justification for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Accepting any justification for such crimes means renouncing our humanity and destroying the rule of international law beyond repair.

Two months ago, the highest international court, the International Court of Justice, determined there was a real and imminent risk of irreparable prejudice to the plausible rights of Palestinians under the Convention

on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. It ordered Israel to undertake immediate measures in relation to its mass and indiscriminate killing of Palestinians, depriving Palestinians of the essential goods for their survival, and incitement to genocide. Instead of implementing that mandatory Court order, Israel has doubled down in the commission of its crimes.

The leaders of the members of the Council have said, in no uncertain terms, that Israel is responsible for the famine under way in Gaza and has used starvation as a method of war. They have called on Israel not to use humanitarian aid as a bargaining chip. They spoke of a human-made disaster, meaning an Israeli-occupation-made disaster. They have repeatedly called on Israel to stop its indiscriminate bombing and to spare civilian life, to no avail. They have called repeatedly on Israel to give civilians safe haven. Instead, it attacked them, even in hospitals and United Nations shelters. Israel attacked civilians in the very places it asked them to move to. It killed them if they stayed and killed them if they left. Now Israel continues to threaten a ground operation in Rafah, where it has pushed and confined civilians to the very edge of the Gaza Strip, in yet another attempt to forcibly displace our people.

Instead of heeding the calls, Israel has attacked those making them. It continues its incitement, in particular, against the United Nations, its Secretary-General, whom we salute here, and its agencies, notably the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the lifeline for Palestinians in Gaza. The Israeli Foreign Minister wrote that UNRWA cooperates with terrorists and that the United Nations has become, under the leadership of António Guterres, “an anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli body that shelters and emboldens terror”. We must defend the Secretary-General and the United Nations.

That outrageous incitement has real-life consequences for United Nations and humanitarian staff on the ground, who are targets of attacks; who are killed, arrested and tortured; who are humiliated and harassed. It also has real-life consequences for Palestinians, as Israel has used that stance as a pretext to block humanitarian aid to be distributed by UNRWA. It is time for all those Israeli actions to trigger a serious international reaction that enforces consequences for those crimes, rather than just issue pleas that Israel continues to dismiss. There is no humanity when our lives are treated as expendable, and there are no rules

without enforcement. Israel has been treated as a State above the law for so long that it feels it no longer has to hide when acting as an outlaw State. From ethnic cleansing to genocide, our agony is caused by Israel’s actions, but also by the impunity it has been afforded and by the fact that countries have not taken decisive measures to stop it. Many even continue to call and treat Israel as an ally, even while it is committing such atrocities.

We express our appreciation to the 10 elected members of the Security Council for having put forward resolution 2728 (2024). We welcome its adoption. We thank Algeria for representing us and all the Arab countries in that endeavour. We salute Arab unity for demanding an immediate ceasefire and for having prevailed. This must be a turning point. This must lead to saving lives on the ground. This must signal the end of the assault and atrocities against our people. A nation is being murdered; a nation is being dispossessed; a nation is being displaced. That has gone on for decades now — but never at this scale since the Nakba and never this openly. From Tantura to Gaza, from 1948 to 2024, we have endured, we have survived, and we have resurrected, only to face death once again. Life must prevail in Gaza. Freedom must prevail in Palestine. For six months now, every single Palestinian in Gaza has endured untold suffering, loss, pain and tragedy. That must stop now. Palestinian hostages and Palestinian victims are not less deserving of compassion and empathy, of outrage and solidarity. They must be freed from fear and want, from siege and occupation, from death and disposition. Families must be reunited and start to heal, at least from the wounds that can actually be healed. They must be given the chance to bury their loved ones, to mourn their loss, to rebuild what can be rebuilt. Even if the ceasefire were to happen now and the siege were lifted now, it would take generations to deal with the trauma and the devastation.

Now that the Council has finally called for a ceasefire, all forces should coalesce to make sure that it is enforced. I extend apologies to those who the world has failed and to those who could have been saved but were not. Let us save the lives of those who survived against all odds. Let us tell them that help is on the way. Let us hold accountable those who inflicted such suffering upon them. Let us end this injustice and end it now. All of this is long overdue.

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

Mr. Erdan (Israel): At the outset, I want to express my deepest condolences to the Russian people and to the families of all the victims of the heinous terror attack on Friday. Terror must always be condemned in the harshest terms.

The Security Council was justifiably very quick to condemn Friday's terror attack in Russia. Just as it wasted no time in condemning the terror attack in Iran against a police station back in December (see SC/15534). Yet, to this day, the Council still refuses to condemn the most widespread and barbaric massacre suffered by the Jewish people since the Holocaust.

On Friday at least 137 people were murdered at Crocus City Hall, in Russia, by radical jihadists. And yes, almost six months ago, nearly 400 people were murdered at the Nova music festival, in Israel, by the radical jihadists of Hamas. Why does the Security Council discriminate between Russians murdered at a concert and Israelis murdered at a music festival? Civilians, no matter where they live, deserve to enjoy music in safety and security, and the Security Council should have the moral clarity to condemn such acts of terror equally, without discrimination.

Sadly, today, as well, the Council refused to condemn the 7 October 2023 massacre. That is a disgrace. It was the Hamas massacre that started this war. I repeat — it was the Hamas massacre that started this war. Nearly six months have passed, and the Security Council has still not condemned the child-murdering rapists that began this war.

Resolution 2728 (2024), just adopted, makes it seem as if the war started by itself. Let me set the record straight — Israel did not start this war, nor did Israel want this war. Israel disengaged and withdrew from Gaza 18 years ago. We wanted a ceasefire and coexistence. One can repeat here slogans and purport to know for the Palestinians what they seek, but that will not make it the truth or the reality. The Palestinian representative here is lying through his teeth when he says that his people want to live side by side with Israel. By the way, as the Council probably knows, he does not represent Hamas, and he does not represent the people of Gaza. They did not choose him to speak for them. His leader, President Abbas, refuses to even condemn the massacre, and he continued to pay terrorists.

After Israel withdrew from Gaza, the Palestinians elected Hamas, a terrorist organization. Hamas converted every inch of Gaza into a terror war machine

right under the nose of the United Nations, maybe even with the help of some United Nations agencies, like the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. And Hamas initiated ceaseless attacks on Israeli civilians throughout the past 18 years, indiscriminately firing thousands and thousands of rockets and missiles at civilians. Today, Hamas is the most popular movement among Palestinians and, according to every poll, the vast majority of Palestinians — not only in Gaza, but also in Judea and Samaria — support Hamas's massacre on 7 October 2023. That is the reality the Council should face and address.

While the resolution fails to condemn Hamas, it does state something that should have should have been the text's driving moral force. The resolution denounces the taking of hostages, recalling that it is a violation of international law. Taking innocent civilian hostages is a war crime, and there is no arguing that this is what Hamas has committed. The release of the hostages should have been the number one priority. When it comes to bringing the hostages home. The Security Council must not settle for words alone but take action — real action. It is unfathomable that when it comes to releasing the hostages, we still see only inaction. Not a single step has been taken by the Council, aside from symbolic words.

Yet when it comes to the situation in Gaza, the Council rushed to take action. It appointed a Special Coordinator and established a monitoring mechanism. The Council visited Rafah to see the aid shipments first-hand, and the Secretary-General has already visited the Rafah crossing twice. Why do our hostages not receive concrete action? What has the Council done to advance their release?

Following the Council's adoption of resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023), which both called for the release of all hostages, Hamas did not stop to even contemplate it for even one moment. It should be very clear that as long as Hamas refuses to release the hostages through diplomatic channels, there is no other way to secure their return other than through a military operation. On the one hand, the resolution says that taking civilian hostages is in violation of international law. Yet, on the other hand, despite the fact that the Council knows that Hamas will not listen to its calls to release the hostages, the Council demands a ceasefire.

Take a moment and think about that moral contradiction. A demand for a ceasefire without conditioning it on the release of the hostages is not only

not helpful — it undermines the efforts to secure their release because it gives the Hamas terrorists hope to obtain a ceasefire without releasing the hostages. All members of the Council should have voted against this shameful resolution.

Where are the Council's actions? Why does it not designate Hamas as a terror organization? Even if there are Council members here who would not take such action due to their political alliances with Hamas leadership, where are the moral efforts to advance such a designation?

I wish to suggest an alternative text that should have been adopted by the Council, if it if it were not so biased against Israel:

“The Security Council strongly condemns and deplors all abuses of human rights and, where applicable, violations of international humanitarian law by the terrorist group [...], including those involving violence against civilian populations, notably women and children, kidnappings, killings, hostage-taking, pillaging, rape, sexual slavery and other sexual violence, recruitment of children and destruction of civilian property [...]

“The Security Council demands that [the terrorist group] immediately and unequivocally cease all hostilities and all abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law and disarm and demobilise. The Security Council demands the immediate and unconditional release of all those abducted who remain in captivity [...]. The Security Council recognizes that some of such acts may amount to crimes against humanity [...].”
(S/PRST/2015/4, pp. 1, 2)

I did not draft that text. Do members know who did? The Council did. This is the resolution adopted by the Security Council 10 years ago when Boko Haram kidnapped the schoolgirls in Nigeria. So, I ask members again, why can the Council call on Boko Haram to lay down their arms, but the same cannot be demanded of the murderous Hamas terrorists? Is the life of little baby Kfir Bibas worth less than the life of a Nigerian child? Sadly, it is for the same reason that Council members can condemn terror attacks in Russia and Iran, but not in Israel — to the Council, Israeli blood is cheap. This is a travesty, and I am disgusted.

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

Mr. Al-Saadi (Yemen) (*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, Mr. President, and your friendly country Japan on presiding over the Security Council for this month. I also thank you, Sir, for holding this meeting.

I would like to express my sincere condolences to my dear colleague, Mr. Vassily Nebenzia, and to the entire delegation of the Russian Federation, as well as the Russian Government and its friendly people, for the dozens of civilians who were killed or injured as a result of a cowardly terrorist act. We condemn that terrorist act in the strongest terms just as we condemn terrorism in all its forms.

The Arab Group would like to thank the 10 elected members of the Security Council for submitting the concise, humanitarian resolution 2728 (2024), which was just adopted by the Security Council. The resolution unequivocally and expressly calls for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza during the holy month of Ramadan leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire, given the urgency of the call from the Arab Group and the international community as a whole, especially in the light of the dangerous and catastrophic deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza, which can no longer be accepted or tolerated.

The Arab Group would like to express its thanks and appreciation to all the Member States of the Council that positively engaged in the negotiations on the resolution. We value the position of Member States that voted in favour of this urgent humanitarian resolution.

The Arab Group also welcomes the fact that the resolution prioritizes the humanitarian dimensions with a view to saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and to ensuring that the Security Council once again shoulders its legal and moral responsibilities for maintaining international peace and security and putting an end to the bloodbath in Gaza.

The Arab Group also reaffirms that the resolution should be considered as a first step leading to another binding resolution that stipulates an immediate sustainable ceasefire in the Gaza Strip in order to compel Israel to immediately and unconditionally cease the war it has launched against the Gaza Strip.

The Arab Group also reaffirms that the ongoing efforts to reach an agreement on the exchange of prisoners and detainees and the adoption of a truce do

not run counter to the call for an immediate ceasefire, as that call would contribute to facilitating and enhancing those efforts.

The Council has been held hostage to political considerations and narrow interests that disregard the humanitarian and legal right to save lives, stop the bloodshed and deliver urgent assistance to those in need without any obstacles. That lies at the heart of the Council's responsibilities and functions. The adoption of today's resolution comes as a response, albeit late, to the Palestinian victims and the calls of the whole world for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. We hope that serious work will continue, beyond the temporary ceasefire, to achieve a comprehensive and final ceasefire to allow the delivery of all humanitarian assistance to Gaza without obstacles and to put an end to the crime of forceful displacement of Palestinians which seeks to uproot them from their territories and homeland. The resolution reaffirms that the Israeli occupation forces do not have free reign in perpetrating daily massacres against women and children, in preventing the delivery of humanitarian assistance and in forcibly displacing Palestinians.

The Arab Group calls for immediate compliance with today's resolution and warns against the consequences of moving forward with the Israeli occupation's plans to launch a ground offensive against the city of Rafah, which is the last safe haven for more than 1.5 million Palestinian displaced persons. That will cause an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe.

Moreover, the Arab Group reaffirms its rejection of the policy of bias, cover up and protection for the plans of the Israeli occupation authorities at the expense of more than 32,000 martyrs and more than 72,000 people who were injured, mostly women and children, in the Gaza Strip over the past five months of the brutal Israeli aggression. The Arab Group categorically rejects the double standards that are prolonging the conflict, given the complete failure to implement any resolutions on Palestine over the past 75 years. We also call once again for the full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023).

The Israeli occupation authorities have continued their crimes, aggression and genocidal war against civilians in the Gaza Strip since 7 October 2023, especially against women and children. They have even added fuel to the fire by adopting a policy of starvation against the Palestinian people, adding to the crimes against humanity and blatant violations committed by the Israeli occupation authorities. Therefore, the Arab Group calls on the Council to hold Israel accountable for its crimes and to impose strict sanctions on all settlers in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in Jerusalem, who are perpetrating acts of violence against the Palestinian people and who are inciting violence against them. The Israeli occupation must also bear the consequences of the brutal aggression and cruel massacres committed against the residents of Gaza. It must bear the responsibility of rebuilding what its monstrous military machine has destroyed. It must also pay reparations for all victims who died as a result of that aggression.

In conclusion, the Arab Group reaffirms that it will continue its efforts at all levels and in all forums to make sure that the Council shoulders its responsibilities and ensure the implementation of the resolution's provisions, namely, an immediate ceasefire; the delivery of all humanitarian assistance without obstacles; a cessation of the policy of forcible displacement of the Palestinian people; the provision of international protection to Palestinians in all the occupied Palestinian territories; and holding Israel, the occupying Power, accountable for all its crimes against the Palestinian people.

The Arab Group also calls upon all countries and international organizations to recognize without delay the independent sovereign Palestinian State, along the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to accept Palestine as a full Member State of the United Nations and its various organs in order to put an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people and to restore some of their inalienable rights which they have been denied over the past decade, so that Palestinians can live in their independent State that is recognized internationally and is a full member of the United Nations, similar to other peoples of the world.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.