



General Assembly

Tenth Emergency Special session

45th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 12 December 2023, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Francis (Trinidad and Tobago)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Resumption of the tenth emergency special session

The President: I declare the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly resumed.

Members will recall that, in paragraph 14 of its resolution ES-10/21, of 27 October 2023, the Assembly decided

“to adjourn the tenth emergency special session temporarily and to authorize the President of the General Assembly at its most recent session to resume its meeting upon request from Member States”.

In that regard, I should like to draw the attention of delegations to document A/ES-10/974, which contains the text of a letter dated 8 December 2023 from the Permanent Representatives of Egypt and Mauritania to the United Nations, in their respective capacities as Chairs of the Group of Arab States and the Organization for Islamic Cooperation group, requesting the resumption of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly.

I intend to conduct the proceedings of this meeting in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and the past practices of its emergency special sessions.

Agenda item 5 (*continued*)

Illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Draft resolution (A/ES-10/L.27)

Draft amendments (A/ES-10/L.28 and A/ES-10/L.29)

The President: This past week, it was with a very heavy heart that I read the letter addressed to me by the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Philippe Lazzarini. That letter, on which many of the Permanent Missions were also copied, highlighted the devastating deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.

As Commissioner-General Lazzarini himself predicted in his letter, the situation has since deteriorated further. Right now, what we are seeing is an onslaught on civilians, the breakdown of humanitarian systems and profound disrespect for both international law and international humanitarian law.

As I said before, even war has rules — and it is imperative that we prevent any deviation from these principles and values, the validity of which resides in their universal application. Tens of thousands have been killed, almost 70 per cent of them women and children. Even more have been forcibly displaced by the incessant violence, with nowhere — I repeat, nowhere — safe to go. And the targeting of hospitals, schools and United Nations-provided shelters, now so overcrowded that they have ceased to function as safe havens, continues unabated. All the while, the blockade on humanitarian assistance has made the delivery of urgently needed life-saving aid near impossible.

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Clearly, what we are witnessing is the unprecedented collapse of an already crumbling humanitarian system, in real time. It is incumbent upon us, as the United Nations, to bring to an immediate end to the suffering of innocent civilians, the mounting death toll of those who are not — I repeat, are not — combatants in the war, and to this untenable humanitarian catastrophe.

Thanks to several countries' relentless efforts, a temporary humanitarian truce enabled the release of hostages, the freeing of detainees and the delivery of some aid. However, since 1 December, we are witnessing the resumption of violence with a kind of ferocity that makes one ask: what next?

Civilians should never undergo the level of suffering we are currently witnessing. And again, I ask: how many more thousands of lives must be lost before we do something? No more time is left. The carnage must stop. For as long as the violence persists, a political resolution to this conflict will continue to be undermined. The longer it takes, the higher the risk that a negotiated two-State solution will increasingly become out of reach. So, the fact of the matter is, quite simply — the violence must stop. It must. I therefore once again add my voice to the demand for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. We have one singular priority, only one: to save lives.

Casting our gaze towards the future, we must assess the situation with honesty in our hearts, truth in our words and a commitment to peace as our utmost ambition. A ceasefire is the only realistic first step towards de-escalating tensions. How can we possibly listen to each other over the deafening thundering of bombs?

On 26 October, members gathered in this Hall, resoundingly and unequivocally calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire (see A/ES-10/PV.39). On 8 December, once more, a veto was cast in the Security Council (see S/PV.9499). Once again, this emergency special session has been resumed. We certainly cannot continue in this way without even the possibility, let alone the prospect, of a meaningful solution.

As President of the General Assembly, I am committed to supporting any and all efforts to put an end to the bloodshed and the psychological torture of the people in Gaza. I used my recent attendance at the Doha forum and at every other platform I can, to encourage cooperation among States, with the same, singular goal in mind — to make peace, for all. In the

name of humankind, I ask members all once again to stop the violence now.

I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolution A/ES-10/L.27.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Group of Arab States, I thank you, Mr. President, for quickly convening this meeting in response to the call from the Arab and Islamic groups to address the obstacles that the world has witnessed and that prevented attempts by the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities and call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in the occupied Palestinian territories. We all witnessed the unjust use of the veto power against a draft resolution (S/2023/970) for a humanitarian ceasefire, despite having garnered the support of more than 100 States Members of the United Nations within a few hours. That is a sign that the majority of the international community is well aware of the seriousness of the current situation and its disastrous repercussions for international peace and security.

The draft resolution before the General Assembly today (A/ES-10/L.27) is very simple in its content, clear in its terms, explicit in its purpose and includes only four operative paragraphs. However, the international community has been unable to implement those paragraphs for more than two months, even in face of the catastrophic humanitarian situation that our Palestinian brothers are enduring due to the brutal attacks by the Israeli occupation forces against civilians in Gaza, leading to unbearable human suffering and posing a serious threat to international peace and security. That has prompted the Secretary-General, for the first time since he took office and for the first time in several decades, to invoke Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations, calling specifically for what the draft resolution demands, namely, a humanitarian ceasefire in the light of the collapse of the health system as a result of the Israeli aggression. There are concerns regarding the demise of public order and of the humanitarian support system in Gaza. It is also impossible to provide humanitarian assistance there.

That is why the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) sent you, Mr. President, a letter highlighting the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and its impact on

UNRWA's capacity to undertake its tasks, let alone the safety and security of UNRWA staff.

The Arab Group stresses that a minority of States are challenging international public opinion, which demands a ceasefire. Their attempts, under flimsy pretexts and justifications, are related to Israel's right to self-defence. They are deliberately ignoring the fact that such a right does not apply to Israel in its illegal occupation of the occupied Palestinian territories as the illegitimate occupying Power. They also ignore that such a right does not exempt Israel from adhering to the most basic values of humanity, the principles of international law and the compelling rules of international humanitarian law that provide protection for women, children and unarmed civilians in the midst of war.

Such unfortunate attempts are a despicable sign of double standards, whereby calls by certain countries demand an end to aggression, war, occupation and attacks on civilians and demand respect for international law and international humanitarian law, but only in specific cases. Unfortunately and shamelessly, those same countries turn their back on the same calls in other situations, especially in relation to the Palestinian people and their right to live in security on their territory, in their independent State and with no war crimes being committed relentlessly against them.

The adoption and implementation by the General Assembly of the draft resolution under its consideration today, which specifically calls for a ceasefire, is the only guarantee for saving innocent civilians. The sixth preambular paragraph addresses — in a most balanced and neutral manner, contrary to what some might claim — the need to protect civilians on both sides in line with international humanitarian law. In its operative paragraphs, the draft resolution calls on all parties to comply with the obligation to protect civilians, for the release of all hostages and to ensure humanitarian access.

The continuation of this destructive war will lead to a full-fledged catastrophe. Lamentably, that will enable the use of genocide as a tool of war, in complete disregard for international law. It will plunge the region into a full-blown war. And it will jeopardize the credibility of this international Organization.

The Group of Arab States calls on all Member States to support the draft resolution before them today in order to prevent any double standards, to preserve

international values, to support collective interests and to maintain international peace and security. The Arab Group also calls on all delegations to vote against any draft amendments proposed, because they were not discussed with the co-sponsoring countries, in order to protect the balance of the text. The text was drafted to align with the draft resolution presented to the Security Council to achieve the number one priority as a very clear and specific objective, namely, a humanitarian ceasefire.

Let us not confuse things. Some delegations have proposed draft amendments, whereas they voted against the resolution adopted by the General Assembly during its tenth emergency special session in October (resolution ES-10/21), which called for a humanitarian pause that would eventually lead to a cessation of hostilities. That unveils the true objective behind those amendments, namely, the continuation of the aggression and the bloodshed of innocent people.

What are we all waiting for to put out the fire? What are we all waiting for to end the war, in which there is no winner? What are we all waiting for to stop the killing and suppress the destructive machine? Why are we waiting when more than 18,000 civilian martyrs have been killed, including more than 7,000 children? Why are we waiting when a child is killed every 10 minutes and the number of people injured has exceeded 49,000?

I address the consciences of all members of the General Assembly today. I call upon them to support the draft resolution and to stop the bloodshed.

(spoke in English)

I sincerely ask you, Mr. President, to suspend the debate following the introductions in order to proceed to take action on draft resolution A/ES-10/L.27 without delay, given the urgency of the situation on the ground and the importance of the global call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. That is in the understanding that the debate would resume immediately after action — the adoption of the draft resolution — and that the tenth emergency session would be only temporarily adjourned after the conclusion of the debate.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Austria to introduce amendment A/ES-10/L.28.

Mr. Marschik (Austria): I have the honour to introduce draft amendment A/ES-10/L.28, proposed

by Austria on draft resolution A/ES-10/L.27, entitled “Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations”.

We meet today in this emergency special session to address the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza. Austria is deeply concerned by the escalation following the heinous terrorist attacks by Hamas on Israeli civilians on 7 October. As our President stressed earlier, Austria has also continuously underlined the importance of ensuring the protection of all civilians at all times. Every civilian death is one too many. We have also called for increased humanitarian aid to reach those in need and have increased our own contributions to humanitarian organizations. We very much welcome the humanitarian pauses and corridors that enabled the release of some hostages and the provision of urgently needed humanitarian aid.

The recent escalation of violence started with Hamas’s brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks across Israel on 7 October, and that deserves to be condemned in the strongest possible terms. As any State that suffers such an attack, Israel also has the right to defend its citizens, in line with international law and international humanitarian law. We will therefore also support the draft amendment to be introduced by the United States (A/ES-10/L.29).

Austria has thoroughly considered the draft resolution before us today. We recognize the efforts by the Group of Arab States to present a short and concise text, and we welcome the fact that that text — in comparison to the resolution presented in October (resolution ES-10/21) — explicitly demands the release of all hostages and demands humanitarian access. However, the resolution falls short in many ways, including by failing to acknowledge Israel’s right to ensure that its citizens are safe and to name the terrorist group responsible for the taking of hostages. The innocent children, women and men held captive in Gaza have not simply disappeared or lost their way; they were abducted by Hamas. We cannot just ignore that fact. The reports of those freed clearly show Hamas’s brutality and complete disregard for human dignity.

It is with that purpose that Austria presented a short and constructive draft amendment that is based on agreed language from Security Council resolution 2712 (2023), adopted on 15 November (see S/PV.9479). That resolution called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas and other groups

and for ensuring immediate humanitarian access. That is the exact language that our draft amendment, which we are proposing today, proposes to add.

We are here today because there was another veto in the Security Council, and just a few weeks ago, the Security Council was able to name Hamas in resolution 2712 (2023). The General Assembly should also have the courage to do the same. We therefore ask all delegations to support the draft amendment we have put before the Assembly and vote “yes”.

If the draft amendment is adopted, Austria will be able to join others in abstaining on the whole text. We will also continue working with all partners to ensure safety and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike. All of them — Palestinians and Israelis — deserve a peaceful future and the restoration of a political process leading to a two-State solution.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States to introduce draft amendment A/ES-10/L.29.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): The past two months have been nothing short of devastating —devastating for Palestinians, who have lost their homes and their loved ones because of a conflict that Hamas set into motion; devastating for Israelis, who still face a barrage of rocket fire, even as they continue to reel from Hamas’s barbaric attacks on 7 October; devastating for Jewish and Muslim people around the world, who are targeted by rising levels of antisemitism and Islamophobia; and devastating for all those who dream of a sustainable peace, in which Israelis and Palestinians enjoy equal measures of security, dignity and freedom.

That sustainable peace is what the United States wants to work towards, and that is what, I believe, so many members of the General Assembly want to work towards as well. And indeed, there are aspects of this draft resolution (A/ES-10/L.27)that we support. We agree that the humanitarian situation in Gaza is dire and requires urgent and sustained attention; that civilians desperately need food and water, and shelter and medical care; that a devastating number of innocent people have been killed; and that civilians must be protected, consistent with international humanitarian law.

In addition, we support the release of all hostages, immediately and unconditionally. Roughly half of those kidnapped on 7 October remain in Gaza. That amounts

to over 100 people subject to — as a number of released hostages have described — hell. We therefore encourage delegations to vote “yes” on the draft amendment proposed by Austria (A/ES-10/L.28), which, like the resolution (Security Council resolution 2712 (2023)) adopted in the Security Council on 15 November (see S/PV.9479), calls for Hamas and other groups to release the hostages and to provide humanitarian access to them immediately.

Again, we support components of the draft resolution proposed today. But here is what else we support — we support speaking out with one voice to condemn Hamas for its terrorist actions on 7 October. Why is that so hard — to say, unequivocally, that murdering babies and gunning down parents in front of their children is horrific, and that burning down houses while families shelter inside and taking civilians hostage is abhorrent? That is why today the United States is proposing a draft amendment (A/ES-10/L.29) that unequivocally rejects and condemns those atrocities, and we urge all members to vote “yes” and declare that what happened on 7 October is intolerable — period. That is the bare minimum, and it should not be that difficult.

In addition, the United States supports immediately addressing the reports of horrific sexual violence unleashed by Hamas on and after 7 October. Over the past 20 years, the United Nations has repeatedly underscored the need to investigate all reports of conflict-related sexual violence. It is long past time that every member apply that same standard to the assaults committed by Hamas.

The United States also supports the International Committee of the Red Cross having access to hostages to provide medical treatment. We support a resumption of humanitarian pauses, which could happen immediately if Hamas only agreed to release women, the wounded and civilian hostages. We have seen how critical those pauses are to getting the hostages out and to giving some respite to civilians and humanitarians in Gaza.

Look — there is no shortage of rhetoric here in New York, but it is the diplomacy that the United States is engaging in on the ground that made that week-long pause possible. It was careful conversation and collaboration with Egypt and Qatar that helped reunite more than 100 hostages with their loved ones and that dramatically expanded humanitarian assistance to Gaza during the break in fighting.

Of course, we support even more aid getting into the hands of those who so urgently need it. Over the past week and a half, the United States has airlifted more than 90,000 pounds of humanitarian aid to Egypt’s border, with more on the way, and we are working with Israel, Egypt, the United Nations and others to surge humanitarian assistance into Gaza. Israel’s decision to open Kerem Shalom for inspections and screening of those humanitarian goods is essential and something that we have been working towards in earnest. Israel’s commitment to ensure there is enough fuel to sustain the humanitarian assistance operation, including civilian infrastructure, is also vital. We have made clear to Israel that we expect it to honour those commitments, and we will hold it to that.

There is more that we support. We support a more robust deconfliction mechanism to help protect United Nations and humanitarian personnel, far too many of whom have lost their lives, while heroically working to save innocent people in Gaza. We support affirming that Israel, like every single country on Earth, has the right and the responsibility to defend its people from acts of terrorism — because we know that Hamas intends to repeat the horrors of 7 October again and again and again. A senior Hamas official said so himself on television. Indeed, it was Hamas that broke the seven-day pause last month by committing a vicious terror attack in Jerusalem, firing rockets into Israel and then failing to release the hostages it had pledged to release.

Let us be realistic: this is a terrorist group that no Member State would tolerate living next to. So long as Hamas remains driven by its murderous ideology, any ceasefire right now would be temporary at best and dangerous at worst — dangerous to Israelis, who would be subject to relentless attacks, and also dangerous to Palestinians, who deserve the chance to build a better future for themselves, free from Hamas, a group that hides behind innocent civilians rather than protect them and that co-opts civilian infrastructure to wage conflict.

Of course, how Israel defends itself matters. Israel must avoid the mass displacement of civilians in the south of Gaza. It must ensure sufficient humanitarian assistance to those who have fled violence. And it must allow civilians in Gaza to return home as soon as conditions allow. We will continue to press at the highest levels for that and for the protection of civilians as Israel pursues legitimate military objectives, because perhaps most of all, while we cannot support a one-sided Security Council or General Assembly

resolution that ignores so much of what we all stand for, we desperately want to see an end to the cycle of unceasing violence.

Our goal must be to stop the death, the devastation and the destruction for the long term. And that is simply not a future Hamas wants to see. As we address this immediate crisis and work to surge humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, we must therefore also work to build the foundation for a truly sustainable peace — one where Israelis and Palestinians can live side by side in States of their own, so that the next generation, and the generations to come, need not experience the devastation of the past two months and finally realize freedom, security and peace.

The President: The representative of Egypt has moved that the debate on agenda item 5 be suspended at this stage for the General Assembly to proceed to the consideration of draft resolution A/ES-10/L.27 and that the debate continue after the action on the draft resolution. It is my understanding that, without setting a precedent and given the urgency of the issue, if the Assembly were to decide to suspend the debate at this stage for the Assembly to proceed to the consideration of draft resolution A/ES-10/L.27 and continue the debate after the action on the draft resolution, and if the Assembly were to adopt the draft resolution subsequently, the tenth emergency special session would be adjourned temporarily following the conclusion of the debate on item 5.

Unless I hear any objection, I shall consider the motion adopted.

It was so decided (decision ES-10/204 B).

The President: The Assembly shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/ES-10/L.27 and draft amendments A/ES-10/L.28 and A/ES-10/L.29.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become co-sponsors of draft resolution A/ES-10/L.27: Afghanistan, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil,

Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, the Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, the Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Dominica, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, the Gambia, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Luxembourg, Malaysia, the Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, the Philippines, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Senegal, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Viet Nam, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

With respect to draft amendment A/ES-10/L.28, I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft amendment, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors of draft amendment A/ES-10/L.28: Albania, Canada, Cyprus, Czechia, Fiji, Greece, Japan, Lithuania, the Federated States of Micronesia, Montenegro, Papua New Guinea, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

With respect to draft amendment A/ES-10/L.29, I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft amendment, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors of draft amendment A/ES-10/L.29: Albania, Austria, Canada, Cyprus, Czechia, Fiji, Germany, Greece, Japan, Lithuania, the Federated States of Micronesia, Montenegro, Papua New Guinea and Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

The President: The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/ES-10/L.27 and the draft amendments thereto, issued as documents A/ES-10/L.28 and A/ES-10/L.29.

Delegations wishing to make a statement in the explanation of vote before the voting on any of the proposals under this item, including the proposed draft amendments, are invited to do so now in one intervention. Before giving the floor for explanations of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Let me start by expressing our gratitude to you, Mr. President, for having convened this resumption of the emergency special session of the General Assembly, and in particular for your clarion call for an immediate ceasefire in the war that is taking place in Gaza.

Pakistan supports the draft resolution submitted by the Arab and Islamic countries (A/ES-10/L-27). The draft resolution is identical in its text to the one that was voted on in the Security Council (S/2023/970). Its aim is to seek an immediate humanitarian ceasefire to provide access for humanitarian assistance and to call for the release of all — I repeat, all — hostages. The draft resolution was co-sponsored by more than 100 Member States when it was submitted in the Security Council. It obtained the affirmative votes of 13 of the 15 Council members, but it failed to be adopted, due to the vote against it by a permanent member of the Security Council.

Yet the international community is not without recourse. The Charter of the United Nations provides the General Assembly with considerable residual powers, and, acting under the uniting for peace process, we can take action to demand a halt to the war that is taking place, killing thousands of people every week. The draft resolution is one that we are confident will elicit the support of the vast majority of the United Nations membership. Pakistan has not co-sponsored the draft resolution, and we have not done so because we reserve the right to submit draft amendments to ensure that the text that adopted by the General Assembly is equitable and balanced. It is therefore a matter of deep regret, if not surprise, that some friends of Israel introduced draft amendments (A/ES-10/L.28 and A/ES-10/L.29) to once again condemn only one side but exonerate the other. Unlike the representative of Canada, I cannot appeal to their sense of equity and justice. But what we can do is appeal to the sense of humanity, justice and fairness of the rest of the United Nations membership. And I am confident that the entire membership will not agree to place the blame only on Hamas, but not on Israel. That would be unjust, unfair and inequitable.

When you deny people freedom and dignity and when you humiliate and trap them in an open-air prison where you kill them, as if they were beasts, they become very angry, and they do to others what has been done to them. Therefore, for Austria and my friend from United States to blame Hamas in their draft amendments is not

equitable or just. The blame, if it is to be placed, has to be placed on both parties, and especially on Israel.

With the end of the pause, the skies over Gaza are filled with projectiles of death, attack helicopters, drones, artillery shells, tank shells, mortars, bombs, missiles. Israel has dropped 25,000 tons of explosives on Gaza — nearly the equivalent of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Israel's goal is not only to erase Hamas; this is a war against the Palestinian people. Israel's goal is to erase not only a people, but also the entire idea of Palestine. Its campaign is a carbon copy of the massive campaigns of racial slaughter by other settler-colonial regimes in history. More than 18,000 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed. Another 42,000 have been wounded, and more than 1.8 million people — over 80 per cent of Gaza's population — have been driven from their homes. Thousands are missing, buried under the rubble. And yet Israel is not deterred. Is it any form of legitimate self-defence to kill 18,000 civilians with impunity and enjoy protection in the Security Council against action? Therefore, I would appeal to the entire membership to see this one-sided slaughter that is taking place.

If Hamas is named and not Israel, members will provide justification to the Israeli war machine to continue its roulette wheel of death. I believe that it is not the intention of the membership of the United Nations to give justification for the genocide that is taking place. On behalf of my delegation, on behalf of all the Arab countries and on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, I therefore appeal to all the membership to vote against the draft amendments proposed in document A/ES-10/L.28, by Austria, and document A/ES-10/L.29, by the United States. In case those draft amendments are adopted, Pakistan will submit draft sub-amendments to them in order to restore balance and to name Israel as the perpetrator of the mass crimes that are taking place in Gaza today.

Mr. Erdan (Israel): Again we find ourselves about to vote on yet another hypocritical draft resolution (A/ES-10/L.27). Not only does this draft resolution fail to condemn Hamas for their crimes against humanity; it does not even mention Hamas at all. This is a draft resolution that will only prolong the death and destruction in the region. That is precisely what a ceasefire means.

On 6 October, there was a ceasefire, and it was abruptly violated — not by Israel, but by 3,000

Hamas Nazis who invaded my country, raping women, beheading babies, burning families alive and deliberately exterminating innocent civilians like insects. What would member countries do if they were in Israel's shoes? Would they call for a ceasefire? What would Moscow, Beijing or Istanbul do? How would they respond? Everyone here knows exactly.

On 1 December, there was another pause in place. And again, it was violently ended by Hamas/Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, which refused to release women held hostage and continued to fire rockets and missiles on our towns and cities. Hamas raped women, committed heinous acts of sexual violence, took women and girls hostage and is not only refusing to release them, but is also refusing the Red Cross access to them. There are no war crimes more heinous than the atrocities Hamas committed, and those that support this draft resolution are giving the terrorists a free pass.

A ceasefire means one thing and one thing only: ensuring the survival of Hamas, ensuring the survival of genocidal terrorists committed to the annihilation of Israel and Jews. That is no secret. Hamas's charter makes that clear, and Hamas leaders have publicly stated that 7 October was just a rehearsal. They have declared that they will repeat their atrocities again and again until Israel ceases to exist. Why would anyone therefore want to aid Hamas in continuing their rule of terror and of actualizing their satanic agenda?

We all know that the so-called humanitarian ceasefire in this draft resolution has nothing to do with humanity. Israel is already taking every measure to facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza. Thousands of aid trucks have entered with tens of thousands of tons of humanitarian aid. Field hospitals have been constructed. Floating hospital ships have been docked. And the only reason more aid is not entering Gaza is because United Nations bodies refuse to solve the logistical difficulties preventing all aid trucks waiting in Rafah from entering. If this draft resolution's true intent was humanitarian aid, it would be focused on improving the logistical capabilities of the United Nations, not on a ceasefire.

A ceasefire will only benefit the terrorists, who steal the humanitarian aid for themselves. It will not benefit the people of Gaza. Is this the solution members want? What will happen the day after the ceasefire? Will this bring peace and stability to the region? Of course it will not. A ceasefire is a death sentence

for countless more Israelis and Gazans. By voting in favour of this draft resolution, States are supporting the survival of jihadist terror and the continued suffering of the people of Gaza.

The exploitation of the Palestinians has made the United Nations a moral stain on humanity. Why are members continuing to allow them to make the United Nations irrelevant? If this body's intentions are just, why do members not start by demanding a ceasefire only from those responsible for violating the past two? Why do members not hold the rapists and child murderers accountable? The time has come to put the blame where it belongs — on the shoulders of the Hamas monsters.

But this draft resolution does not even condemn Hamas. It does not even mention Hamas. I honestly do not know how someone can look in the mirror and support a draft resolution that does not condemn Hamas and does not even mention Hamas by name. Therefore, at the very least, I urge members to vote for adding a condemnation of Hamas to the draft resolution. I have an idea: if members want a real ceasefire, here is the right address. This is the phone number of Hamas's office in Gaza. Everyone can call +970 599 3765 and ask for Yahya Sinwar. Tell Hamas to put down their arms, turn themselves in and return our hostages. That will bring a complete ceasefire that will last forever.

Why are members not doing that? Why are they not holding Hamas accountable? Ironically, today is the International Day of Neutrality, the day on which the United Nations reminds itself to be an impartial mediator in de-escalating conflict. In ignoring the war crimes of genocidal terrorists today of all days, this body further proves its utter irrelevance. What a disgrace. But this draft resolution's absurdity goes further than protecting genocidal terrorists. This draft resolution is a written paradox. On the one hand, it calls for a ceasefire. Yet, on the other hand, it calls for the release of all hostages. Have members forgotten who they are dealing with? Have they forgotten that Hamas, the terror organization holding the hostages, has zero respect for international law? A useless draft resolution will not secure the release of hostages. In fact, a ceasefire will only ensure that their suffering is extended at the hands of the terrorists. Hamas does not respond to General Assembly resolutions. Hamas responds only to threats to its survival. Continuing Israel's operation in Gaza is the only way any hostages will be released. This disgraceful draft resolution

serves only one purpose — to try to tie Israel's hands and allow Hamas to continue its reign of terror.

This institution was founded in the wake of the Holocaust. It was established to prevent such atrocities from ever happening again. But by supporting this draft resolution, members are doing exactly the opposite; they are voting in favour of a genocidal jihadist organization.

Unlike our enemies, Israel believes in life and peace, not brazen violence. No piece of paper, especially one that is adopted by a biased, politicized majority, will prevent Israel from defending itself against those that seek our destruction. Israel is fighting a war for its future. There is not a single Member State here that would act differently in a similar situation. A ceasefire serves only to prolong Hamas's reign of terror. I therefore urge all member States to vote against this draft resolution.

Ms. Joyini (South Africa): I deliver the following statement in explanation of vote before the voting on behalf of my country, South Africa.

We thank you, Mr. President, for reconvening this emergency special session of the General Assembly, which has been called because of yet another failure of the Security Council to fulfil its mandate. We thank the Group of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation for requesting the resumption of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly.

On 6 December, the Secretary-General took the initiative to invoke Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations, bringing to the attention of the Security Council a matter that, in his opinion, may aggravate existing threats to the maintenance of international peace and security. South Africa commends the Secretary-General for taking that initiative, and we remain steadfast in calling for an immediate, comprehensive ceasefire to assess the needs on the ground, allowing for the full opening of all humanitarian corridors to grant much-needed aid and basic services to reach those in need. We therefore emphasize the urgent implementation of General Assembly resolutions to realize that and alleviate the suffering of Palestinians in desperate need of relief aid.

The Secretary-General's initiative was necessary in the context of the inability of the Council, at the very least, to call for a humanitarian ceasefire. The international institutions created at the end of the Second World War, including the United Nations,

human rights instruments and judicial mechanisms, were established so that history would not repeat the cruelty experienced during the war. Yet, by failing to act, to call for an end to the loss of civilian life, it has become clear that there is a selective application of the international instruments and the utilization of some of those mechanisms for attaining narrow interests. That has resulted in calling into question the effectiveness of the system.

As members of the General Assembly, this emergency special session presents an opportunity for us to illustrate that the Organization that was created to give hope for peace is not tone-deaf to the suffering of the most vulnerable. The emergency special session is an opportunity for us to illustrate that we are able to take on the responsibility entrusted to us by the United Nations Charter and international law and call for an immediate ceasefire and not condone war in the name of self-defence.

The events of the past six weeks in Gaza have illustrated that Israel is acting contrary to its obligations in terms of the Genocide Convention. As a United Nations State Member, and owing to South Africa's painful past experience of a system of apartheid, this impresses on us, as Member States, the need to take action, in accordance with international law.

An issue we also cannot ignore is the failure of Member States of the Organization to abide by the decision taken on 27 October (resolution ES-10/21). South Africa was among more than two thirds of the Member States that called for an immediate ceasefire at the General Assembly. That has been ignored. We cannot proclaim the importance of international law and the importance of the United Nations Charter in some situations and not in others, as if the rule of law applies only to a select few. For international law and moral obligations to be credible, it should be uniformly applied and not be selective. We all signed the Charter. Let us commit to and respect the decisions taken in accordance with the Charter.

The lack of meaningful action from the United Nations indicates that, more than ever before, a reform of the system of global governance so that it is fair, equitable and has the capacity to respond to the needs of all persons in situations of threat and harm is urgently needed. The system that is needed should not just be a tool for the most powerful countries of the world, but one that provides protection for the most vulnerable.

The inadequacy of the Security Council, which has a mandate derived from the United Nations Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security, has become glaring. The Security Council, due to aggravated politicization, has not, at the very least, been able to call for a humanitarian ceasefire to allow for much-needed humanitarian supplies to go to those who need them most. That once again demonstrates the urgent need for a reform of this body.

South Africa supports draft resolution A/ES-10/L.27, which is being considered today, entitled “Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations”.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting. Before proceeding to take a decision on the draft resolution, I wish to address the question concerning the majority required for the adoption of the draft resolution.

In the light of Article 18, paragraphs 2 and 3, of the Charter of the United Nations, is there any objection to taking action on draft resolution A/ES-10/L.27 by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting?

I see no objection. A two-thirds majority of members present and voting is therefore required for the adoption of the draft resolution. The two-thirds majority of members present and voting is therefore also required for the adoption of the draft amendments to the draft resolution.

Before we proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/ES-10/L.27, in accordance with rule 90 of the rules of procedure, the Assembly shall first take a decision on draft amendments A/ES-10/L.28 and A/ES-10/L.29, one by one.

We now turn to draft amendment A/ES-10/L.28.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan,

Kenya, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay

Against:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, Chad, China, Comoros, Congo, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominica, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Gambia, Guyana, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Türkiye, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Yemen, Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bhutan, Botswana, Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Jamaica, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Mongolia, Mozambique, Panama, Suriname, Thailand, Togo, Vanuatu

Draft amendment A/ES-10/L.28 was rejected by 61 votes to 89, with 20 abstentions.

The President: We now turn to draft amendment A/ES-10/L.29.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay

Against:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, China, Comoros, Congo, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominica, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Gambia, Guyana, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Türkiye, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Yemen, Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bhutan, Botswana, Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Jamaica, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Panama, Suriname, Thailand, Togo, Vanuatu

Draft amendment A/ES-10/L.29 was rejected by 62 votes to 84, with 25 abstentions.

The President: Since draft amendments A/ES-10/L.28 and A/ES-10/L.29 were not adopted, we shall proceed to take action on draft resolution A/ES-10/L.27.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/ES-10/L.27, entitled "Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Türkiye, Tuvalu,

Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Austria, Czechia, Guatemala, Israel, Liberia, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, United States of America

Abstaining:

Argentina, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Malawi, Marshall Islands, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Palau, Panama, Romania, Slovakia, South Sudan, Togo, Tonga, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay

The draft resolution was adopted by 153 votes to 10, with 23 abstentions (resolution ES-10/22).

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

The President: Before giving the floor for explanations of vote after the voting, may I remind members that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Kridelka (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): The second Secretary-General of this Organization, Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld, once stated that the United Nations was created not to take us to heaven, but to save us from hell. Unfortunately, that is what the civilian population of Gaza expects of us today.

It is in the spirit, instilled by the Secretary-General upon invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations, that Belgium voted today in favour of resolution ES-10/22. If I may, I will focus on three points.

First, our vote in favour of the protection of civilians and international law, including international humanitarian law, is a firm call to counter the risk of implosion of the humanitarian space in Gaza. It is to that end that Belgium joins the majority of States Members of this Organization in supporting the immediate establishment of a humanitarian ceasefire that could ultimately lead to an end to the hostilities. Belgium also joins the even greater number of those demanding the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, as well as immediate and unhindered humanitarian access.

Moreover, the work of United Nations agencies must be facilitated and vital infrastructure must be restored. We advocate for the continued opening of the Kerem Shalom crossing point to facilitate and accelerate the delivery of vital supplies. Any deliberate obstruction of the delivery of aid to civilians must be stopped.

Secondly, those humanitarian considerations should not be interpreted as a call for an end to the fight against Hamas and other terrorist groups. The solution will not come from extremists and other enemies of peace. Their actions increase the risk of the conflict spilling over into the West Bank and the region, and must be stopped. In that regard, Belgium calls for accountability and supports the adoption of coercive measures against terrorists, such as those taken on Friday, 8 December, by the European Union (EU) against Hamas leaders and violent extremists. Belgium supported the American draft amendment (A/ES-10/L.29) with that in mind, hoping that its adoption would allow us to take an important step here in New York.

Thirdly, it is now up to us to contribute collectively to the creation of an environment conducive to the search for a negotiated solution to the Palestinian question and to the establishment of a political horizon leading to a two-State solution. Belgium will support the constructive actors whose actions will bring us closer to this objective. To that end, Belgium supports the organization, in due course, of an international peace conference. That is also the purpose of the Peace Day Effort, supported jointly by the EU and the League of Arab States.

We must act collectively — in the short term by giving shape to a humanitarian ceasefire, in the medium term by putting an end to the actions of terrorists and violent extremists, and in the long term by working on a lasting solution to this conflict that guarantees Israel the possibility of living in peace and security and that, at long last, realizes the Palestinians' right to self-determination.

Mr. Alwasil (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation voted in favour of the resolution submitted today (resolution ES-10/22), in the hope of putting an end to the tragic situation and suffering faced by the Palestinian people as a result of the Israeli occupying forces' bloody and inhumane military campaign.

Allow me at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for your response to the resumption of the tenth emergency

special session of the General Assembly, which is being held following the Security Council's failure, yet again, to adopt a resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. We meet here in this Hall a second time, under increasingly difficult and painful conditions, as the fierce campaign of killing and displacement persists and violations of international conventions, resolutions and humanitarian principles continue. Meanwhile, the Security Council remains incapable of taking any measures to deter that campaign and those violations, amid a total absence of international accountability mechanisms.

Every day, bombardment affects every place in Gaza — hospitals, schools, infrastructure and residential complexes — leaving destruction and causing thousands of civilian casualties among children, women and the elderly. The total number of civilian casualties in Gaza now exceeds 18,000 martyrs, most of whom are children and women, exacerbating the catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Gaza day after day and demonstrating the international community's failure to stop that catastrophe.

My country reaffirms that those grave humanitarian conditions are the result of the continued escalation and can in no way be justified. Preventing bloodshed, protecting civilians and stopping military operations are urgent priorities, and any procrastination or obstruction to addressing them is unacceptable. A failure to do so immediately will exacerbate the major humanitarian catastrophe that the Israeli occupation and the international community bear responsibility for.

At the extraordinary joint Arab-Islamic summit hosted by Riyadh on 11 November, in the presence of the Heads of State and Government of the member States of the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, decisions were adopted that represent the will of the Arab and Islamic peoples. Their aims are to stop the bloodshed, ensure the unrestricted delivery of aid, put an end to violations, overcome the crisis and the unjustified suffering in Palestine, stand with the Palestinian people in their bid to achieve their legitimate demands — that their occupied territories be restored to them and that their independent State be established. Furthermore, those aims include calling on the international community and its institutions to uphold their responsibility to achieve those aims without hindrance.

The humanitarian catastrophe and the tragic events taking place in Palestine make it imperative that we

act to put an immediate end to military operations, provide protection for civilians, release hostages and prisoners in line with international norms and laws and our shared humanitarian principles, and find a peaceful solution to the crisis that will lift the region out of the recurring cycle of violence.

In view of the reluctance of some members of the international community to support the call for a ceasefire and the delivery of sufficient humanitarian assistance, we express our displeasure with the double standards and selectivity that characterize the approach to the crisis, and we deeply regret the reluctance of some to support the Palestinian people's right to enjoy a dignified life. In that regard, we reiterate the call for a ceasefire and an end to the bloodshed, and we condemn the targeting of civilians, the attempt at forced displacement and the policy of collective punishment against the people of Gaza.

My country stresses that it always prioritizes working towards peace and calling for compliance with obligations under international conventions and laws. Given that the current crisis is the result of the international community's failure to end the occupation and implement the two-State solution and that silence on Israel's illegal practices for 70 years is what has brought the region to the current crisis, we call on the international community to shoulder its responsibilities to immediately stop this war, in order to prevent bloodshed. We stress the need to reach a comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian question, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative, the two-State solution and the establishment of a Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital.

In conclusion, we thank all those who supported the resolution, which was adopted by an overwhelming majority, reflecting an international position that the resolution must be binding and immediately implemented.

Mrs. Kamboj (India): India voted in favour of the resolution just adopted by the General Assembly (resolution ES-10/22). The situation that the Assembly has been deliberating upon has many dimensions. There is the terrorist attack in Israel on 7 October and the concern for the hostages taken at that time. There is an enormous humanitarian crisis and the large-scale loss of civilian lives, especially of women and children. There is the issue of observing international humanitarian law in all circumstances, and there is the endeavour of

finding a peaceful and lasting two-State solution to the long-standing Palestine question.

Our challenge in this extraordinarily difficult time is to strike the right balance. The gravity and complexity of what the international community faces is underlined by the Secretary-General invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations. We therefore welcome the fact that the international community has been able to find common ground to address the multiple challenges facing the region right now.

Ms. Stoeva (Bulgaria): Bulgaria is gravely alarmed by the catastrophic situation of civilians in Gaza and reiterates its call for continued, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and aid to reach those in need through all necessary measures.

We underline the utmost importance of ensuring the protection of all civilians at all times, in line with international humanitarian law, and deplore all loss of civilian life. Every lost life is one too many. However, we must also recognize that the heinous and indiscriminate terrorist attacks of Hamas across Israel, which we condemn in the strongest terms, brought civilians unimaginable suffering. There is no justification for terror, and Israel has the inherent right to defend itself, in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law. Unfortunately, the resolution that was just adopted (resolution ES-10/22) falls short of recognizing that, and for those reasons, Bulgaria had to abstain in the voting on it.

Ms. Leendertse (Germany): We would like to thank all Member States involved — Egypt in particular — for their work on this very important issue and for keeping our joint focus on the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

We support the objective of the resolution (resolution ES-10/22) to reduce violence and human suffering and to enable unhindered humanitarian access. We are saddened by every life that has been lost in the conflict and express our condolences to all victims and their families — Israeli, Palestinian and United Nations staff. Nevertheless, we cannot endorse a text that does not condemn the heinous acts of terror and the violations of international humanitarian law that have been committed by Hamas against Israel since 7 October, including the horrific acts of sexual violence against Israeli women and girls. We condemn those acts in the strongest possible terms, and so should all Member States. For more than two months, Hamas has continued to attack Israel with rockets on a daily

basis and has used Palestinian civilians as human shields. We reiterate our call on Hamas and others to immediately release all remaining hostages and to lay down their weapons. We commend efforts undertaken by the United States, Qatar and Egypt to secure the release of hostages.

How can we possibly demand a humanitarian ceasefire while attacks by Hamas continue? Israel has a right to defend itself in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law. At the same time, we will continue to call for humanitarian pauses and unhindered humanitarian access so that assistance can reach those in need. Civilians must be protected during conflict. It breaks our hearts to witness the immense suffering of the Palestinian population, especially women and children. Germany supports the Secretary-General's efforts to act to mitigate the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and the collapse of the humanitarian system. We will continue to do our utmost to help to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population in Gaza, including by supporting humanitarian relief efforts. We will remain committed to supporting the Palestinian people now and in the future.

We regret that the resolution before us does not acknowledge Hamas's primary responsibility for starting this terrible conflict with its horrific attack on 7 October. It is against that backdrop that Germany abstained in today's voting.

In the United Nations, we speak the language of international law, humanity and peaceful coexistence. That is what unites us. We must all step up our efforts to work towards a meaningful peace process, allowing both Israelis and Palestinians to live side by side in peace and security in two independent States and within secure borders.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea voted in favour of the draft amendment proposed by Austria (A/ES-10/L.28), as the language clarifies that "Hamas and other groups" are holding the hostages. We also voted in favour of the draft amendment proposed by the United States (A/ES-10/L.29), as the language clearly condemns the terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October and the taking of hostages.

Thanks to the testimonies by hostages released during the recent seven-day pause, we learned more details about the horrific terrorist attacks by Hamas. We once again condemn, in the strongest terms, the

heinous terrorist attacks by Hamas against Israel and call for the immediate release of all the remaining hostages. We believe that Israel has the right and the duty to protect itself and its citizens. But irrespective of nationality, gender, age, ethnicity or faith, all civilians must be protected. We urge all parties to take measures to protect civilians in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Therefore, we voted in favour of the resolution (resolution ES-10/22) introduced by Egypt, considering that an extended humanitarian pause that can be durably maintained is essential to save the lives of Palestinian civilians and hostages in Gaza. The current humanitarian situation is calamitous, and we need time to save civilian lives and guarantee full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access for civilians in Gaza. Far too many civilian lives have been lost, and those alive are also suffering from the lack of requisite humanitarian assistance and essential services. The cessation of hostilities is also needed to facilitate the release of all the remaining hostages held in Gaza.

The vicious cycle in the Middle East must stop, and now is the time to redouble our efforts to realize the two-State solution. Sustainable peace in the region can be achieved only through sincere negotiations based on the two-State solution, with both Israelis and Palestinians living side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders, consistent with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. We hope that the United Nations can speak with one voice to that end. As an incoming Security Council member, the Republic of Korea is determined to help to achieve the common aspiration of the world for peace in the Middle East.

Ms. Michail (Cyprus): This emergency special session has been called because of the alarming humanitarian situation in Gaza.

We unequivocally reject and condemn the inconceivable terrorist attacks by Hamas that commenced on 7 October, as well as the deplorable taking of hostages. We demand the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held, as well as ensuring immediate humanitarian access to them. To that end, we supported the draft amendments (A/ES-10/L.28 and A/ES-10/L.29) because this crisis was not born in a vacuum. We deeply regret that the draft amendments were not adopted.

The humanitarian pause at the end of November allowed for the release of some of the hostages held by Hamas and other terrorist groups and for greater loads of emergency relief to enter into Gaza. However, many of the hostages still remain captive, and the colossal humanitarian needs in Gaza are increasing by the hour. It is for that reason that we voted in favour of the resolution (resolution ES-10/22). Palestinian and Israeli civilians must be protected in accordance with international humanitarian law. International law, including international humanitarian law, must be fully respected. We are also working with partners towards ensuring that humanitarian assistance enters Gaza via a dedicated one-way maritime corridor. Given the gravity of the humanitarian crisis, we hope to complement current routes, primarily through Rafah, to assist in alleviating the suffering.

Ultimately the only way forward is to revive the Middle East peace process on the basis of a two-State solution in line with the United Nations resolutions. We stand ready to support that aim, as it is the only way to ensure conditions of sustainable security and stability, for Israelis and Palestinians alike, and it is a crucial step towards fostering stability in the Middle East as a whole.

Mr. Larsen (Australia): Australia appreciates the Group of Arab States bringing forward the resolution (resolution ES-10/22).

Australia is gravely concerned about the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza. Human suffering is widespread and unacceptable. Civilians who fled northern Gaza are now being pushed further south, and as the conflict spreads south, there are increasingly fewer safe spaces to go. The world has witnessed a harrowing number of civilian deaths, including children. That must not continue. Australia again calls for safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access in Gaza and safe passage for civilians. We acknowledge the gravity of the Secretary-General invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations. Australia welcomed the humanitarian pause agreed by the parties in November and brokered by the United States, Egypt and Qatar. The resolution's calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire is the world urging that such pauses be resumed so that urgent humanitarian aid can flow.

Australia is part of that call, and we support the resolution. We see such pauses as critical steps on a path

to a sustainable and permanent ceasefire. But such a ceasefire cannot be one-sided. Australia also supported the draft amendments proposed by Austria and the United States (A/ES-10/L.29 and A/ES-10/L.28, respectively) because we believe that the resolution should have gone further by unequivocally condemning Hamas as the perpetrators of the 7 October attack on innocent Israeli civilians. That terrorist attack precipitated this crisis. This critical fact should be clearly recorded in this place. Australia unequivocally condemns the ongoing acts of terror by Hamas, its use of human shields and its use of civilian infrastructure to launch attacks on Israel. Australia reiterates its demand for Hamas to release all remaining hostages immediately and unconditionally. In defending itself, Israel must respect international law, including international humanitarian law. Civilians and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, must be protected. Hamas must be defeated and dismantled, but that cannot be without account for the protection and welfare of Palestinian civilians.

Australia supports Palestinians' right to self-determination. There must not be forced displacement of Palestinians from Gaza, physical reoccupation of Gaza, any reduction in territory or any use of siege or blockade. And Gaza must never again be used as a platform for terrorism. We reaffirm that settlements are illegal under international law and are a serious obstacle to lasting peace. We also recommit ourselves to working with any sincere partner towards that just and enduring peace in the form of a two-State solution where Israelis and Palestinians can live securely within internationally recognized borders.

Mrs. Tahzib-Lie (Kingdom of the Netherlands): I thank you, Mr. President, for reconvening this emergency special session. I also wish to take this opportunity to express our unwavering support for the Secretary-General. We take his call on the humanitarian situation in Gaza, including his decision to invoke Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations, very seriously.

The current situation in Gaza is horrendous. Too many innocent lives have been taken. The scale of suffering and destruction in Gaza due to Israel's bombardments is heart-wrenching. Medical facilities are under extreme duress. The collective suffering of the people in Gaza, among them many children, should stop. We mourn the loss of the lives of all civilians, including journalists, United Nations personnel, humanitarian workers and medical staff. Our thoughts are with their loved ones. Urgent and immediate

action is needed to halt the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza; 80 per cent of the population is internally displaced. There is no effective protection for civilians, and they have nowhere to go. No place in Gaza is safe now. The humanitarian system is on the verge of collapse, with the risk of starvation and the outbreak of infectious diseases.

The resolution (resolution ES-10/22) contains important messages in that regard, as well as the essential demand to release all hostages. Therefore, we worked hard to reach an agreement on the text that would enable a vote in favour of the resolution. However, the lack of clarity on the temporary nature of a humanitarian ceasefire in the text creates confusion. We tried to change the text accordingly, but our proposals were unfortunately not accepted, as the text was not open for further negotiations. Furthermore, the resolution lacks any reference to the heinous acts by Hamas. Based on those considerations, the Kingdom of the Netherlands abstained in the voting on the resolution.

The harsh reality is that attacks by Hamas and others in the region continue. A case in point are the repeated Houthi missile attacks targeting Israel and vessels in the Red Sea. Israel's continued need to defend itself against continuous attacks therefore still stands, with respect for international humanitarian law. The Kingdom of the Netherlands remains shocked by the heinous terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October, and we condemn them in the strongest possible terms. The spiral of violence that has followed has seen too many civilian casualties. It is essential that both parties do everything to ensure that civilians are protected, in line with international humanitarian law. We need to see more urgent action.

The way that Israel implements its self-defence matters. We consistently and explicitly urge Israel to demonstrate restraint, and we consistently stress the importance of proportionality and necessity in its current operations.

In that light, we expect Israel to do the following.

First, it must do everything to ensure that civilians are protected, which is an obligation and a necessity.

Secondly, it must ensure that direct and unhindered humanitarian assistance gets to the people of Gaza, which is an obligation under the international law. Now that the fighting has resumed and needs in Gaza are rising, decreasing the flow of aid is unacceptable. The

decision to open Kerem Shalom for the inspection of humanitarian aid trucks is a much-needed step in the right direction, but much more is needed. Aid needs to pass through, including fuel and medical supplies. Those goods also need to reach all those in need in Gaza.

Thirdly, we expect Israel to ensure that humanitarian workers are able to work in Gaza safely and without constraint. That is also an obligation under international law.

Fourthly, we also reiterate that settler violence is completely unacceptable. Under occupation law, the Israel Defense Forces has the obligation to actively protect Palestinian civilians from violence. Israel needs to act decisively and urgently to stop the settler violence and illegal annexations in the West Bank, which further destabilizes the situation in the region. In that context, we urgently call for immediate, new, substantial and frequent humanitarian pauses. The ending of the suffering of innocent people is an obligation. The conflict needs a political solution in accordance with international law.

Mr. Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): The situation before us is quite clear. One Member State, a permanent member of the Security Council, misusing its unequal authority of the right of the veto and in clear disregard of the united will of the international community, has decided to stand with the Israeli criminal regime and materially enable it in its ongoing massacre against civilians in Gaza. The United States is blatantly opposing a ceasefire, which means prescribing war, violence and eventually more death for children and women in Gaza.

As highlighted by the Secretary-General in his recent briefing before the Security Council (S/PV.9498), no place in Gaza is safe, and there is an imminent risk of the total collapse of the humanitarian support system. The Secretary-General, using his authority under Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations, has urgently called on the Security Council to intervene and bring a halt to the Israeli regime's attacks in Gaza. The call received the full support of the international community. The Charter initially conceived the power of veto as a tool to maintain and ensure international peace and security. However, today that authority is frequently abused to obstruct the very establishment of peace and security. This trend is a clear alarm, signalling the imperative need to eliminate such discriminatory practices.

Over the past two months, we have witnessed a violent act of aggression carried out by the Israeli armed forces in the Gaza Strip, resulting in the death of more than 18,000 Palestinian civilians. The situation on the ground entails all risk factors for genocide and corresponds to the definitions under article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and all Member States bear the responsibility for impeding and preventing its occurrence. This regime has been pursuing a scorched-earth policy by deliberately destroying infrastructure and residential buildings in such a way as to ensure that there is no place to live in Gaza. Those barbaric crimes must be addressed by the international community in a decisive manner, and Palestinians must be protected internationally. Considering the major failure of the Security Council to address the situation on the ground, we recall the responsibility of all Member States under international law regarding the need to prevent genocide and war crimes, and we reiterate our call for regional and national measures that could in any practical way curb the violence and deal with the current situation.

Mr. Tammsaar (Estonia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In conclusion, my delegation voted in favour of the resolution (resolution ES-10/22), considering the urgency of the situation and the strong need to address the dire humanitarian conditions in Palestine, and would like to put on record that our support for the resolution is without prejudice to our long-standing and constant national position on issues related to the question of Palestine and non-recognition of the Israeli regime. Today's vote by the General Assembly is a victory for the blood of the brave martyrs of Gaza over the Israeli war machine and clearly indicates the international will.

Ms. Jurečko (Slovenia): Slovenia co-sponsored the draft resolution (S/2023/970) presented in the Security Council (see S/PV.9499), and we followed suit today in the General Assembly. We voted in favour of the resolution (resolution ES-10/22) and supported the draft amendments (A/ES-10/L.28 and A/ES-10/L.29), which, in our view, would have contributed to a more accurate reflection of the complex situation on the ground.

It has been more than two months of human suffering, physical destruction and collective trauma across Israel and the occupied territory. Words seem to have been said in vain, as we continue to observe one

of the darkest hours for this Organization unfolding in front of our eyes. I would like to focus on three elements that brought us here today: the letter by the Secretary-General, the letter by the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the veto cast in the Security Council.

First, I wish to express our firm support to the Secretary-General and the United Nations in their efforts to prevent a further deterioration of an already dire situation on the ground. The scale of killing, suffering and destruction reported has been a clear testament that at this stage only one step is sufficient, namely, a declaration of a humanitarian ceasefire. Let us be clear: there can be no justification for the brutal terrorist attack by Hamas on Israel, and we strongly condemn it, including reported sexual violence. We repeat our call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. What we are witnessing in Gaza are clear violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. We remain appalled by reports of attacks on civilians and on schools, hospitals, United Nations facilities and other civilian objects, as well as by the high number of civilian casualties. People do not have access to the most basic provisions needed for survival. There is an increased risk of a breakdown of public order. Almost 2 million people have been displaced; any further mass displacements should be prevented. Slovenia remains concerned about the escalation of settler violence in the West Bank and the announced additional expansions of illegal settlements. Settlement activities are illegal, erode the viability of the two-State solution and undermine the prospect for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. We are deeply worried about spillover and increased potential for the destabilization of the wider region, and we call for restraint.

Secondly, we would like to express our deepest concern over the situation with UNRWA, its severely limited ability to implement its mandate and the circumstances in which the humanitarian community is working on the ground. Many humanitarian workers have been displaced and are themselves in need of humanitarian assistance. People serving humankind have been failed by humankind. UNRWA represents a glimmer of hope for thousands of Gazans and thousands more in the West Bank and the neighbouring countries. Its potential collapse would mean that humanitarian assistance in Gaza would no longer be possible at the

scale that is needed. Slovenia commends the work of humanitarian agencies and their personnel in Gaza, who continue to provide assistance and protection to the people, often at a great sacrifice, paying the ultimate price with their own lives. We express our condolences over the high number of victims among UNRWA staff.

Thirdly, we deeply regret the inability of the Security Council to address this situation. While recognizing the efforts of many countries engaging in diplomacy on the ground and commending the adoption of Security Council resolution 2712 (2023), we must note that the Secretary-General has clearly stated that current conditions are making it impossible for meaningful humanitarian support on the ground. The Security Council should therefore step in and support rapid, sustained, unimpeded and safe access for humanitarian aid, equipment and personnel to Gaza and its distribution within Gaza. That can be done only through a humanitarian ceasefire that leads to a truly permanent ceasefire. That brings us to the need for a resumption of a meaningful political process, which will lead to the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. Slovenia has and will continue to support initiatives that reinforce the Middle East peace process. We therefore strongly support the organization of a peace conference as soon as possible.

In conclusion, we would like to thank both the Secretary-General and the UNRWA Commissioner-General and many other parts of the United Nations system for conveying clear messages to the membership. "Never again" is now, and that is why Slovenia clearly supports the call for a humanitarian ceasefire.

Ms. Schwalger (New Zealand): New Zealand welcomes the adoption of today's resolution (resolution ES-10/22). In relation to the draft amendments put forward by the United States (A/ES-10/L.29) and Austria (A/ES-10/L.28), we wish to register our disappointment that they were not adopted. The draft amendments would have introduced elements that New Zealand felt would have benefited the resolution and that remain important to New Zealand's position on this terrible conflict. New Zealand has consistently acknowledged Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas's terrorist attacks. We unequivocally condemn those attacks and reiterate that all remaining hostages being held by Hamas must be released immediately and unconditionally. In defending itself, Israel must respect international law, including international humanitarian

law. Civilians and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, must be protected.

New Zealand is gravely concerned about the impact of this conflict on civilians. The loss of life and the level of suffering in Gaza are utterly devastating. Over 1 million people have nowhere to go. There are outbreaks of disease and overwhelming challenges with nutrition, sanitation and overcrowding. There is simply not enough water, food, fuel or shelter. Critical humanitarian assistance must get to those who need it. The sick and injured must be cared for without risk of attack. The basics for survival must not be used or withheld as weapons of war. We thank the Secretary-General and the United Nations and humanitarian staff for their leadership, especially those working on the ground in enormously difficult circumstances and under significant constraints. We are distressed that the effective delivery of humanitarian aid in Gaza is now almost impossible. Ensuring meaningful humanitarian access is critical; it is a key requirement of international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention. We call on Israel to facilitate the necessary access immediately to alleviate the plight of civilians in Gaza.

Last week, the Secretary-General sounded the loudest possible alarm about this crisis. We must answer his call. It was for this reason — the urgent need for the provision of critical life-saving assistance — that New Zealand co-sponsored the United Arab Emirates Security Council draft resolution (S/2023/970), which called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. We are deeply disappointed that the casting of a veto yet again prevented the Security Council from agreeing on a result on a response to a pressing crisis.

The General Assembly once again has had to take action where the Security Council has failed to do so. In the Assembly in late October, New Zealand joined 120 member States in voting for a resolution (resolution ES-10/21) that called for an immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce to facilitate the delivery of aid. Today's General Assembly resolution has the same objective — the fighting to stop and civilians to be protected. Therefore, New Zealand once again supported this call and voted for resolution ES-10/22. At the same time, as we push for a humanitarian ceasefire, we urge all parties involved in the conflict, as well as countries with influence in the region, to take urgent steps towards establishing a sustainable ceasefire. A lasting solution to the conflict will be achieved only by

peaceful means. The revival of the Middle East peace process is critical. There is no military solution to this conflict, just as there is no role for Hamas in the future governance of Gaza.

I have two final points. New Zealand condemns settlement-building and expansion in the West Bank, which is illegal under international law, and condemns the violence being perpetrated by settlers. We call for Israel to address it urgently. New Zealand also urges Governments in the region to do all they can to ensure that this conflict does not spill over into the wider region.

Mr. Kulháněk (Czechia): Let me start by stating unequivocally that Czechia grieves for every civilian life lost in the ongoing conflict. And we will continue to do so.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza deeply troubles us, and we appreciate the collective efforts to protect civilians and alleviate their suffering. To that end, we welcome most aspects of resolution ES-10/22 as a genuine attempt to address the current situation in the Middle East. But in the context of this emergency special session, the primary task of the General Assembly is the maintenance of international peace and security. That is not possible without addressing not only the issues related to the legal framework for the conduct of war, but also the conditions under which States may resort to the use of force.

Regrettably, this resolution fails to condemn the unspeakable atrocities committed by Hamas on 7 October. The events of that day leave no room for excuses or justifications. The horrific terrorist attack by Hamas resulted in the tragic loss of countless lives, spanning various nationalities. Furthermore, we have all been appalled by the horrifying images depicting victims of sexual violence inflicted by Hamas terrorists. We are also of the opinion that calling for an immediate ceasefire ignores the grave threat that Hamas poses not only to Israel, but also to the Palestinian people.

The harsh reality on the ground is that an immediate ceasefire would only leave Hamas in control, thereby significantly heightening the prospect of yet another devastating terrorist attack and human suffering. Let us also remember that the civilian death toll continues to rise due to Hamas's reprehensible practice of using civilian infrastructure and civilians as human shields. It is with that in mind that we believe that Israel needs to be able to exercise its right to defend itself, and it

needs to do so in a manner that abides by international law and international humanitarian law.

Based on the reasons that I just outlined, it is with a heavy heart that we decided to vote against this resolution. We appreciate the efforts by Austria and the United States to bring more balance to the text, and that is why we supported their draft amendments (A/ES-10/L.28 and A/ES-10/L.29, respectively).

Last but not least, let me reiterate my country's unwavering commitment to actively work towards the two-State solution. This is essential to achieving statehood for the Palestinian people and ensuring security for Israel and peace for people on both sides.

Mr. Sekeris (Greece): Greece expresses deep concern about the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza, where we are unfortunately witnessing the rapid deterioration of conditions on the ground. The priority right now should be to address the humanitarian emergency so that sufficient aid can be delivered to the civilian population through safe passages and by means of humanitarian pauses. Humanitarian needs must be addressed so as to sustain Palestinians in Gaza, given the prospects of reconstruction, and to avoid forced displacement from Gaza.

We remind the Assembly of Greece's principled position that Israel has the right to defend itself, while at the same time complying with international humanitarian law. We should not lose sight of Hamas's responsibility, its terrorist attack of 7 October and its taking of Israeli hostages. We regret that the text does not condemn terrorism and does not mention that hostages were taken or held by Hamas. That is why we co-sponsored the draft amendments (A/ES-10/L.28 and A/ES-10/L.29, respectively) proposed by Austria and the United States. We would have preferred a resolution that ideally reflected those elements. However, considering the present critical humanitarian circumstances, we decided to vote and voted in favour of resolution ES-10/22.

Mr. Rae (Canada): Like everyone in the Assembly, we mourn the innocent life of every Israeli and Palestinian that has been lost in this conflict and express our profound condolences to all families and communities affected by the terrible violence.

Canada continues to unequivocally condemn Hamas's brutal terrorist attacks against Israel on 7 October, including sexual and gender-based violence,

and the killing, maiming and abduction of civilians. We also continue to call for the immediate and unconditional release of all remaining hostages and demand they be treated humanely, in accordance with international law. We reiterate the call for the facilitated departure of all foreign nationals in Gaza, including Canadians, trying to leave Gaza.

We recognize Israel's right to defend itself. In defending itself, Israel must respect international humanitarian law. Civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected. We are alarmed at the diminishing safe space for civilians in Gaza. The price of defeating Hamas cannot be the continuous suffering of Palestinian civilians.

Canada remains deeply concerned about the humanitarian crisis and its severe impacts on Palestinian civilians, especially women and children. The ongoing humanitarian crisis weighed heavily in Canada's decision to support resolution ES-10/22.

(spoke in French)

The recent pause in hostilities resulted in the release of more than 100 hostages and improved humanitarian access to affected Palestinian civilians. Canada regrets that the pause could not be extended and continues to call for the delivery of much-needed fuel, water and humanitarian aid to Palestinians in Gaza. To that end, Canada supports the humanitarian ceasefire referred to in the resolution as a necessary measure to protect civilians, to allow significantly more humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip and to enable foreign nationals, including Canadians, to leave Gaza.

(spoke in English)

Hamas must release all hostages, stop using Palestinian civilians as human shields, stop intentionally occupying civilian sites for terrorist purposes and lay down its weapons. We continue to support a clear statement from the General Assembly calling out the role of Hamas in the conflict, its taking of hostages and its use of human shields. One day, we will get such a statement. That is why we supported the draft amendments proposed by Austria and the United States respectively to the resolution (A/ES-10/L.28 and A/ES-10/L.29), and that is why we join Australia and New Zealand in saying that Hamas can have no future role in the governance of Gaza.

Canada remains committed to the goal of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle

East, including the creation of a Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel.

Mr. Valtýsson (Iceland): In the light of the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza, Iceland chose to co-sponsor and consequently vote in favour of the resolution presented by Egypt (resolution ES-10/22).

Following a much-needed humanitarian pause, the resumption of hostilities has resulted in a full-scale escalation of the conflict. Once again, innocent civilians, trapped in unbearable conditions, bear the brunt of the conflict. The civilian death toll is unacceptable.

However, we regret that the two draft amendments, proposed by Austria and the United States (A/ES-10/L.28 and A/ES-10/L.29, respectively), which would have acknowledged the brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attack by Hamas on 7 October and its leading part in the taking of hostages, were not adopted. There can be no justification for terrorism. Recognizing Hamas's part in the ongoing conflict does not contradict our strong and urgent call for an immediate and sustained humanitarian ceasefire, full compliance with international law by all parties, the protection of civilians, the immediate release of hostages and the timely and sufficient provision of humanitarian aid.

Iceland supports the Secretary-General's appeal for decisive action by Security Council, invoking Article 99 of the Charter of United Nations, and was among the 102 Member States that co-sponsored the draft resolution not adopted on Friday (S/2023/970). The ongoing impasse in the Security Council is deeply regrettable. We call on Council members to redouble their efforts to avert further escalation and a collapse of the humanitarian system in Gaza.

We deplore the immense suffering and unacceptable civilian death toll. We are alarmed by the impact of mass evacuations of civilians in Gaza. Those need to stop. There is no safe place in Gaza.

While the increased flow of humanitarian aid through a second inspection point announced by Israel is a positive step, much more needs to be done. Life-saving aid to millions of civilians in need must be delivered now, and access to food and water, electricity and fuel must be ensured. The vast majority of the population is already displaced, sheltering in overcrowded facilities — including schools that no longer provide education — or simply sleeping on the streets. Health-

care services are in tatters, and of growing concern is the high risk of epidemic and waterborne diseases, which would further compound the crisis.

Iceland has responded to United Nations emergency appeals with increased contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), our long-standing humanitarian partner. UNRWA services, which are a lifeline for over 2.2 million people in Gaza, are now on the verge of collapse, according to Commissioner-General Lazzarini. If UNRWA fails, the entire humanitarian system in Gaza will follow suit. We must spare no effort in preventing that from happening. We deplore that more than 130 UNRWA staff members have been killed in the conflict.

Iceland has condemned in the strongest possible terms the brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks by Hamas two months ago. We have repeatedly called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, as rightly does the resolution we just adopted.

All parties to the conflict must adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law. Breaches thereof must be carefully investigated, including of sexual violence.

The Secretary-General has rightly raised the alarm about the further escalation of the conflict. Its consequences are being felt throughout the region and beyond. Across the world, people are calling for an end to the hostilities, just as the Icelandic Parliament did in a unanimous resolution on 9 November.

Even in the midst of crisis, when peace seems unrealistic and distant, we must focus on a long-term, sustainable solution to the conflict, namely, a two-State solution, based on international law, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition. The cycle of violence must stop.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland voted in favour of the resolution adopted by the Assembly today (resolution ES-10/22). The resolution responds to the most pressing need, namely, for the protection of civilians and for the rapid, safe and unhindered access of humanitarian aid to people in need in Gaza, where “no one is safe” anymore and where the humanitarian system risks complete collapse, as the Secretary-General has said.

Switzerland supported this resolution and calls for its implementation, knowing that the humanitarian

ceasefire is understood as a timebound humanitarian pause, without prejudice to Israel's right to ensure its defence and security. Switzerland continues to call on the parties to respect, under all circumstances, their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, particularly with regard to the protection of Israeli and Palestinian civilians, regardless of the adoption of resolutions by the principal organs of the United Nations.

Humanitarian access through all possible crossing points, as well as respect for the principles of proportionality, distinction and precaution in the conduct of hostilities, are part of those obligations. They are also a necessity in order to prevent a regional escalation of the conflict, particularly in the West Bank and Lebanon.

Switzerland also voted in favour of the draft amendments proposed by Austria and the United States respectively (A/ES-10/L.28 and A/ES-10/L.29, respectively) and regrets that they were not adopted. The Austrian draft amendment would have helped to clarify that humanitarian access must be immediate, which corresponds to repeated requests from the Secretary-General and other senior representatives of impartial humanitarian organizations in the light of the humanitarian emergency in Gaza. Adopting that draft amendment would also have made it possible to clearly identify the parties responsible for the taking of hostages, including Hamas and other groups. Finally, since 7 October, we have supported an explicit condemnation of the acts of terror perpetrated by Hamas and would have preferred that to be included in the resolution, as proposed by the American draft amendment.

In the immediate term, the establishment of a humanitarian ceasefire and the provision of aid must urgently save lives and enable humanitarian actors to carry out their work safely. But those measures cannot be ends in themselves. Switzerland will continue to work towards a political solution to the conflict in accordance with international law.

Mr. Lagdameo (Philippines): While we condemn the 7 October terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas, the Philippines emphasizes adherence to international humanitarian law, especially the principles of proportionality and distinction, in response to security threats. It is imperative that, in any military action, the impact on civilians be considered and efforts be made to minimize, if not eliminate, collateral damage.

We are deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza. The Philippines strongly believes that a humanitarian ceasefire is crucial to halting the suffering and loss of life. Such a ceasefire is a necessary step to facilitate the delivery of urgent humanitarian aid to all civilians, irrespective of their affiliation. We call on all parties to comply with their obligations under international law, particularly regarding the protection of civilians, especially women and children. Upholding those laws is essential in ensuring the safety and dignity of all individuals affected by this conflict.

Finally, the Philippines seeks to contribute to a solution that respects the rights and needs of both Palestinian and Israeli civilians. We advocate for a peaceful resolution that upholds international law and leads to lasting peace and security in the region.

Mr. Gunaratna (Sri Lanka): Sri Lanka condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Similarly, we condemned the attacks that took place on 7 October. However, the thrust of resolution ES-10/22, which was just adopted and which Sri Lanka co-sponsored, entitled "Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations", is its focus on the Secretary-General's call invoking article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations and the letter of 7 December by the Head of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The resolution expresses concern about the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip; emphasizes the need for the protection of civilians, both Israeli and Palestinian; calls upon all parties to exercise maximum restraint; demands an immediate ceasefire and the unconditional release of hostages held by all parties and reiterates the demand for all parties to comply with their obligations under humanitarian law. Resolution ES-10/22 does not seek to condemn any party to the conflict or seek to apportion blame to any party.

Draft amendment A/ES-10/L.28, introduced by Austria, and draft amendment A/ES-10/L.29, introduced by the United States of America, seek to apportion blame to only one party. The adoption of either would have diverted the focus of the resolution and made it manifestly imbalanced. Sri Lanka therefore voted against both amendments.

Mr. Ferreira Silva Aranda (Portugal): We welcome the resolution adopted today (resolution ES-10/22) by the General Assembly. While being deeply disappointed that the use of the veto has hindered the

Security Council, we must remain seized of the urgency of the situation and continue to press for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

Today the General Assembly took a clear stance in demanding full respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of civilian populations, and in demanding the unconditional and immediate release of hostages and the ensuring of unhindered and sustained humanitarian aid. We sincerely hope that those calls, echoing the timely ones made by the Secretary-General and other representatives of the United Nations system, will be heeded.

The situation on the ground in the Gaza Strip is unbearable, with a mounting number of casualties, many — far too many of them — women and children, and huge numbers of displaced people. The fighting must be halted. It also remains crucial to prevent the spread of the conflict to the West Bank and beyond, by accident or calculated action. We encourage the continuation of regional and international efforts, in both the multilateral and bilateral spheres, to prevent a spillover.

We need to return to the diplomatic track, breaking this cycle of violence and extremism. It is our collective responsibility to address the structural drivers of this conflict. That will require renewed involvement on the part of all relevant actors and a determined effort to implement the Security Council resolutions on the matter and set a clear and solid path to a Palestinian State, fulfilling the two-State solution.

Once again, Portugal reiterates its unequivocal condemnation of the heinous terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October. Terrorism in all its forms should be condemned. For that reason, we supported the draft amendments introduced today (A/ES-10/L.28 and A/ES-10/L.29), as they aimed to achieve that purpose without compromising the message that was strongly supported regarding the situation in Gaza. Gaza needs a swift, unhindered and scaled-up response. Gaza needs all parties to comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights. Gaza needs a humanitarian ceasefire, as this resolution makes clear.

Mrs. Horváth (Hungary): We are here today to discuss the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, ignited by the horrendous and brutal acts of terrorism committed by Hamas on 7 October. Hungary condemns those brutal and barbaric attacks in the strongest

possible terms, and we would have hoped for the General Assembly to do accordingly, after two months of silence on this issue.

We find it unacceptable that today's resolution (resolution ES-10/22) once again failed to condemn the barbaric attacks that led to today's events, including continuous indiscriminate rocket attacks against Israeli civilians. We also condemn the use of Palestinian civilians, civilian infrastructure and hospitals as human shields by Hamas. Those acts are flagrant violations of international humanitarian law. In the face of such violent terrorist attacks, Hungary strongly emphasizes Israel's inherent right to defend itself, in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law. All parties must uphold and respect their obligations under international humanitarian law. All civilian life matters equally.

In that vein, we recall the resolution adopted by the Security Council calling for urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors throughout the Gaza Strip and recalling all parties' obligation to act in compliance with international humanitarian law (Security Council resolution 2720 (2023)), notably with regard to the protection of civilians, especially children. We welcome the fact that finally, two months after the 7 October attacks, the General Assembly is now calling for the release of the hostages held by Hamas. We once again call on Hamas and other terrorist groups within Gaza to release all remaining hostages immediately and without precondition, cease hostilities and spare all civilians further suffering. We recall that there are Hungarian citizens who are also being held hostage by the terrorists. It is crucial that the International Committee of the Red Cross be granted access to the hostages and that humanitarian assistance and medical support thereby reach those held in captivity as well. Taking hostages is a grave violation of international humanitarian law.

The immediate, safe, sustainable and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid is required by means of all necessary measures, including humanitarian corridors and pauses for humanitarian needs. Food, water, medical care, food and shelter should be able to reach the most vulnerable, while ensuring that such aid is not abused by terrorist organizations. The hostilities are severely affecting hospitals and taking a horrific toll on medical and humanitarian staff, including United Nations personnel. Their safety and security must also be ensured. We must utilize our collective

efforts, capabilities and engagement to avoid a spillover in the region, which would have even more devastating humanitarian consequences. Those are the reasons that we supported draft amendments A/ES-10/L.28 and A/ES-10/L.29, submitted by Austria and the United States, and they are the exact same — we could not support resolution ES-10/22.

Mr. Leucă (Republic of Moldova): The Republic of Moldova voted in favour of resolution ES-10/22, entitled “Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations”. My country has joined other Member States in strongly condemning Hamas’s brutal terrorist attack against Israel on 7 October, since there can be no justification for terror. Furthermore, my country recognizes Israel’s right to self-defence in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law.

In that respect, Moldova supported, and would have welcomed, the inclusion of the draft amendments to the resolution proposed by Austria and the United States (A/ES-10/L.28 and A/ES-10/L.29). However, the urgency of the situation on the ground led us to support the resolution. We deeply sympathize with all the innocent victims — Israelis, Palestinians, citizens from many other countries and United Nations staff members. The Palestinian and Israeli civilian populations must be protected. All the hostages held by Hamas and other groups must be released immediately and unconditionally. Full and unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance must be provided throughout Gaza and safe passage assured to all who wish to leave Gaza.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): My delegation voted in favour of resolution ES-10/22, which we have just adopted. We did so in the light of the catastrophic humanitarian situation on the ground as described by the relevant United Nations agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other entities. We had already supported a similar call from the Assembly in late October (resolution ES-10/21), and we noted the positive if short reprieve for the civilian populations affected during the period when fighting ceased, both with respect to the release of hostages and the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian assistance. The situation today is even more distressing, and we therefore support a humanitarian ceasefire, as called for by the Secretary-General, which was unfortunately blocked by the use of the veto last Friday in the Security Council (see S/PV.9498). We are also fully supportive

of the calls for full respect on the part of the parties to the conflict for international humanitarian law, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and provisions concerning humanitarian assistance.

While the resolution addresses immediate priorities to protect civilians, it does not comprehensively reflect our position. We therefore supported the draft amendment put forward by the United States (A/ES-10/L.29), as we agree that the condemnation of the Hamas terrorist attacks by a political body of the United Nations was important and necessary. Ideally, that condemnation would have happened in the Council itself on 8 October, in accordance with established Council practice, immediately after the attack on the civilian population in Israel, but unfortunately no text to that effect was considered, then or in any of the early subsequent meetings of the Council. In its absence, for the second time in the emergency special session we have voted in favour of a draft amendment along those lines.

The past few weeks have demonstrated the need for diplomacy in the face of an unprecedented crisis in the protection of civilians. The progress made in that area between 24 and 30 November came in accordance with the terms of resolution ES-10/21, adopted in the then most recent convening of the emergency special session, as well as those of Security Council resolution 2712 (2023). We deplore the veto cast on Friday in the Council, which blocked a decision supported by a very clear majority in the Council and in the wider membership as well. We encourage you, Mr. President, as you have done before in meetings resulting from the use of the veto, to produce a summary of this meeting for transmission to the Security Council.

We welcome the leadership of Secretary-General Guterres and his personal engagement for the protection of civilians. We support his decision to invoke Article 99, highlighted in today’s resolution, and hope that it indicates a renewed willingness to use that powerful tool in other situations where it is warranted. Liechtenstein condemns in the strongest possible terms the heinous terrorist attacks against Israel by Hamas and other groups, and the massive violations of international humanitarian law that they have committed. We again call for the unconditional and immediate release of all remaining hostages. We also again underline the need for full, immediate, safe, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access and call for full respect for international humanitarian law by all parties and for

access to be granted to humanitarian organizations to provide the necessary emergency relief.

The number of personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East who have now died in Gaza — along with many other humanitarian workers — is 133, the highest number of United Nations casualties in any operation since the founding of our Organization. We condemn deliberate attacks on humanitarian workers and pay tribute to those who have lost their lives while acting to save the lives of others and alleviate suffering in extreme circumstances. The denial of humanitarian access to civilians and attacks on humanitarian workers are both prohibited under the Fourth Geneva Convention and its Additional Protocols and may amount to a war crime.

Liechtenstein calls for accountability for serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including through the ongoing investigations of the International Criminal Court, which has jurisdiction over the most serious crimes under international law committed on the territory of the State of Palestine and by Palestinian nationals. We are particularly concerned about the numerous reports of sexual and gender-based violence committed by Hamas. All such reported crimes must be vigorously investigated and prosecuted. We are also deeply concerned by the massive escalation of violence in the West Bank, particularly extremist settler violence.

The time for diplomacy is now. It is too late to prevent the horror of human suffering and the shocking loss of human life, but it is not too late to bring an end to the ongoing catastrophe. The inalienable rights both of the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples can be ensured only by upholding their respective right to self-determination, expressed through a two-State solution. Serious, committed and legitimate interlocutors ready for genuine engagement for peace are a prerequisite, as is the strong support of the international community.

Mr. Szczerski (Poland): Poland's support for resolution ES-10/22, entitled "Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations", is based on our long-standing commitment to the principles of international humanitarian law. Multilateralism and the rules-based international order have always been Poland's top priority. We therefore want to express our strong support for the Secretary-General and the United Nations, commending their invaluable efforts to address the crisis in the Gaza Strip. Poland's commitment to

these values is reflected in our involvement in efforts to alleviate the dire humanitarian situation of populations in the Middle East and to restore peace in the region. Poland has been involved for decades in humanitarian and development aid projects in the Middle East, with a particular focus on Palestine, including Gaza, as well as Lebanon and Jordan.

In the light of the current situation, our position remains very clear. We remain concerned about the dramatic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. We support all international coordination aimed at restoring calm and a speedy and continued flow of humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza. We would also like to express our gratitude to the personnel of international organizations and United Nations agencies, especially the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Poland has decided to provide additional funds, amounting to more than \$2 million, to be used by UNRWA, the World Food Programme and UNICEF's Gaza Fund. We strongly underline that the humanitarian assistance should be distributed by United Nations agencies so that it does not fall to hands of terrorists.

At the same time, we stress that terrorism aimed at the civilian population is never justified and cannot be tolerated under any circumstances. We reiterate our conviction that Israel, like any other country, has the right to defend itself and its citizens. However, we wish to stress that that must take place in compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law. The civilian population must be protected. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the barbaric terrorist attacks by Hamas and other Gaza militant groups that brought death and suffering to the innocent people of Israel. We also continue our call for an immediate and unconditional release of all hostages taken by Hamas. In that vein, the draft amendments presented by the United States (A/ES-10/L.29) and Austria (A/ES-10/L.28) correspond with our position. We believe that they offered a valuable and important contribution to the document. That is why we also decided to support them.

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Tunisia voted in favour of the resolution (resolution ES-10/22), as it calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and an end to the continued barbaric aggression against Palestinian civilians, both in the Gaza Strip and in the other occupied Palestinian territories, which has lasted for more than 60 days. The attacks have led to

unprecedented humanitarian tragedies, atrocities and war crimes by the occupation forces against women, children, the elderly, families, patients, medical teams, humanitarian relief workers, United Nations personnel and journalists.

We had hoped that the same text (see S/2023/970) would have been adopted by the Security Council, which has demonstrated once again that it is being held hostage to political calculations. It is clearly unable to shoulder both its moral and legal responsibilities. It cannot restore its credibility and image that way.

We welcome the position taken by the Secretary-General and the fact that he invoked Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations. We reiterate the call upon the international community and the Security Council to shoulder their responsibilities and impose respect for international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law, which is a duty, an urgent matter and not optional.

All occupation forces must be held accountable for what they committed and continue to perpetrate against the Palestinian people, including massacres, genocide crimes and abuse with awkward silence of the international community that encouraged them to continue their aggression and recklessness vis-à-vis all treaties.

We cannot equate the butchered with the butcher, or the occupier with the besieged and displaced and those who suffer from the worst forms of collective punishment and violations. The civilians who require protection are the Palestinians being pursued by the Israeli killing machine everywhere. The entire world has witnessed the occupation forces' humiliation of Palestinians as they were displaced, stripped of their clothes and subjected to ruthless humiliation. Thousands of them have been, for decades, in prisons controlled by the occupation, which continues to arbitrarily arrest more Palestinians by the thousands.

It is ironic that the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the international community is taking place alongside the progressive erosion of the principles that protect the dignity of humankind and ensure respect for basic rights, especially the right to life, which is continuously violated by the occupation forces and ignored by those responsible for preserving it within multilateral institutions.

Given our conscience and obligations, history will never forgive the international community if it fails to end the aggression against and stop the suffering of the Palestinian people. The killing of more than 18,000 civilians, the killing of a child every five minutes, the bombardment and destruction of more than 300,000 homes, the displacement of more than 1.5 million Palestinians, the targeting of hospitals, schools and places of worship, and the disregard for the principles of international law and human rights have all been met with silence.

It is important to adopt a resolution such as the one we just adopted. However, it is more important to ensure its implementation and that of the resolutions that preceded it. We therefore call once again for an effective and responsible international action, without double standards, to ensure the protection of the Palestinian people and end the crimes of the occupation. Tunisia will always stand with the Palestinian people. Our principled position is to firmly support their inalienable rights to self-determination, freedom and independence and their right to an independent, sovereign State on the territory of Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Ms. Oppong-Ntiri (Ghana): Ghana has consistently maintained that the international community has the responsibility to help to end the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in the Gaza Strip. A few days ago, we supported a similar draft resolution in the Security Council (S/2023/970) towards achieving that objective. And we did the same today, because we believe it is the right thing to do at this time. We reiterate our condemnation of the unwarranted attacks by Hamas that began on 7 October and our demand for all hostages to be released unconditionally. We reaffirm our commitment to the two-State solution and express the hope that the current international mediation efforts will help end the cycle of violence on a permanent basis.

Mr. Massari (Italy): Let me first thank President Francis for promptly convening and presiding over this emergency special session. Let me begin by joining other delegations in acknowledging the tireless efforts of the United Nations and all humanitarian partners on the ground, who are delivering assistance in extreme conditions.

Turning to today's proceedings, Italy abstained in the voting on the resolution entitled "Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian

obligations” (resolution ES-10/22), which was just adopted after its introduction by the representative of Egypt, whom we would like to wholeheartedly thank. Italy is deeply concerned about the humanitarian emergency in Gaza and is working bilaterally and with our international and regional friends and partners to alleviate the suffering of civilians, because, in this conflict, those who are most vulnerable — children, women and the elderly — are paying the highest price. Italy is helping to treat injured Palestinian, including children, in partnership with the United Arab Emirates. We have provided additional assistance to Palestinians through the United Nations agencies. We are in close contact with our close Arab friends and partners in the region to explore ways to achieve a sustainable peace and stability in the region. In that vein, we will support initiatives aimed at de-escalation, including humanitarian pauses, to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance, the protection of civilians and the liberation of all hostages.

We decided, however, to abstain in the voting because there are many elements that are still missing from the resolution, namely the unequivocal condemnation of the brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks by Hamas against innocent civilians on 7 October. We have already reiterated our outright condemnation several times. We would have hoped to see it incorporated in the text just adopted, and we reaffirm it once again today, hoping that the time when the General Assembly and the Security Council could finally condemn such atrocious crimes and recognize Hamas’s sole responsibility for the brutal attack of 7 October is near.

For those reasons, we voted in favour of the draft amendments proposed by the United States (A/ES-10/L.29) and Austria (A/ES-10/L.28). There is no justification for terror, and there should be accountability for the 7 October crimes. In that regard, let me recall the initiative that Italy, together with France and Germany, recently launched within the European Union, requesting additional individual sanctions against Hamas’s supporters. In the face of such a terrorist threat, Italy recognizes Israel’s legitimate right to self-defence. We stress, at the same time, that the exercise of the right to self-defence needs to be in full compliance with international law and international humanitarian law. We have asked, and we will continue to ask, Israel to do its utmost to minimize civilian casualties. Lastly, we should not lose sight of

the broader picture. We firmly believe that the only viable solution for peace in the Middle East remains the two-State solution.

Mr. Dandy (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation voted in favour of the resolution adopted by the General Assembly (resolution ES-10/22) because it represents a genuine expression of the global conscience and humanity. It calls for an immediate cessation of the brutal aggression against the brotherly Palestinian people.

Once again, my delegation expresses its reservation about certain language in the resolution, which could mean equating the Israeli occupier with the occupied Palestinian people, or equating the butcher with the victim.

I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Dennis Francis, for resuming the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly to discuss the dangerous situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially since the Security Council is unable to act due to the United States, which is preventing it from shouldering its responsibility, namely, the maintenance of international peace and security. The United States insists on giving Israel the green light to continue its brutal aggression in Gaza.

We commend the courageous step taken by Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations. Despite the ferocious campaigns launched against him, he is shouldering his responsibilities by invoking Article 99 of the Charter and warning the Security Council that what is taking place in the Gaza Strip is an issue that threatens international peace and security.

My country deplores and expresses grave concern over the deteriorating situation in the Gaza Strip. In his letter to the President of the General Assembly, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) informed him that UNRWA’s ability to implement its mandate in Gaza has become very limited. He also stressed that UNRWA is going through the most difficult circumstances in its history and called upon the General Assembly to take immediate action.

We are resuming the session today for the second time in less than two months because the United States and some Western countries insist on liquidating the Palestinian question and on killing the children of

Palestine in support of the Israeli entity. That entity is carrying out an unprecedented genocide that so far has led to 18,000 martyrs, most of whom are women and children. It is a brutal campaign in which Israel has also targeted journalists and even United Nations employees. Israel has destroyed infrastructure and continued its inhumane blockade on the Gaza Strip, while preventing the delivery of humanitarian assistance and using internationally prohibited weapons, including incendiary phosphorous bombs. It has threatened to use nuclear bomb and has adopted a policy of mass destruction. Those amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and ethnic cleansing. Israel is violating all international laws and the principles of humanity.

Everyone must be aware that what is taking place today in the occupied Palestinian territories did not start on 7 October. It started decades ago because Israel continued to deny the Palestinian people their right to establish an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. Israel has continued its occupation and its acts of aggression since 1948.

The United States has used the veto once again in the Security Council (see S/PV.9499). It stood against the will of the majority of Council members and caused a draft resolution (S/2023/970) to fail. The aim of that draft resolution was to reach a humanitarian ceasefire; rejecting it constituted a shameful insult to the human principles and disproved the claim of protecting civilians. There is no doubt that Washington and other Western States are waging the war in the Gaza Strip alongside the Israeli occupation with the sole objective of eliminating the Palestinian people and establishing the so-called "Greater Israel" over the bodies of dead Palestinian women and children, after destroying their houses and cultural heritage.

Instead of allowing the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities after more than two months of perpetrating massacres and genocide, the United States veto protected war criminals and gave them yet another green light to continue with their massacres, destruction and displacement. It is ironic that the State claiming to protect democracy and human rights and that is supposed to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security is now preventing the Security Council from shouldering its responsibility, namely, stopping the Israeli aggression. That proves the biased policies of the United States when it comes to protecting Israel and providing it with

immunity for violating international law and the United Nations Charter.

We all saw how the repeated failure by the Security Council encouraged undeterred Israel to continue with its systemic crimes after the pause, falsely claiming that it has the right to self-defence at a time when certain Western States are shedding crocodile tears over the principles of humanity in other regions of the world. That is a blatant image of international hypocrisy and of double standards when dealing with the values of right and justice in line with the interests of major Western countries. I say to those countries that know themselves that we will never believe them again.

Israel today is setting fire to the region, pushing it to the brink of an implosion that cannot be contained, due its continued brutal crimes in Palestine, which coincide with its acts of aggression in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan and with continued aggression against the territories of the Syrian Arab Republic by targeting civilian airports and infrastructure. Israel also continues its aggression against Lebanon, in blatant violation of international law and the Charter. That proves once again that Israel is only a tool for sowing the seeds of chaos and terrorism in the region. It is the main threat to international and regional peace and security. All of that is taking place as the United States and its partners are protecting Israel by mobilizing their fleets in the eastern Mediterranean and providing unprecedented military and financial support to their tool, the Israeli entity.

In conclusion, the Syrian Arab Republic would like to stress once again that we stand with the brotherly Palestinian people in their struggle to liberate their occupied territory and establish their sovereign, independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. We emphasize the need for the immediate cessation of the Israeli aggression, the urgent provision of humanitarian support to the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and the prevention of forced displacement, while ensuring that Israel and its supporters be held accountable without impunity.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): For more than two months now, the world has been witnessing a horrific tragedy unfolding in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict zone. Every hour, dozens of innocent civilians are killed in Gaza. We note the efforts of the Egypt-led Arab group to draft a relevant General Assembly resolution demanding a ceasefire and an

immediate release of hostages to prevent a humanitarian disaster in Gaza (resolution ES-10/22). For our part, we co-sponsored the Arab initiative and hope that, following the General Assembly, the Security Council will also finally be able to fulfil its obligations — all the more so because the representatives of the United Arab Emirates have prepared and submitted another draft resolution for consideration by the Security Council on increasing and monitoring the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza (S/2023/1029).

Essentially, the plan to bomb the Gaza Strip back into to the Stone Age is being implemented right before our eyes. The scale of this catastrophe has forced the Secretary-General, for the first time in many years, to invoke Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations and to call on the Security Council to take a decision to stop the bloodshed. It pains us to note that, in all this time, collective efforts within the framework of the United Nations have not produced the desired result. But the reason for that is not that multilateral diplomacy has stalled. And it is not because of the Security Council's "inability" to fulfil its purpose, as some say, including today. Let us call a spade a spade — the reason is that the United States stands as an insurmountable obstacle in the way of all peacekeeping efforts.

From the very beginning, the United States has explicitly rejected multilateral diplomacy. We have heard from American representatives that, so long as Washington is engaged in quiet bilateral diplomacy on the ground, no one should interfere, so as not to spoil anything. That is the main reason that the Security Council has been unable to take any decisive action in all this time.

Several members have proposed draft resolutions to resolve the situation and have held intensive negotiations in good faith, almost around the clock. China, Russia and the United Arab Emirates regularly request Council meetings to discuss the situation in Gaza, which, incidentally, our Western colleagues have never done. As early as 16 October, Russia proposed the very first draft resolution (S/2023/772) in the Security Council calling for an immediate ceasefire. Western delegations did not support it.

Because of the American veto, the Brazilian draft text (S/2023/773), which was garnering sufficient support among the members of the Security Council, also failed to be adopted. Since then, many terrible events have taken place that have revealed the

inevitability of what we have been saying since the beginning — an unambiguous demand for the parties to cease hostilities and violence. It is not a request but a demand, as befits the Security Council.

The Security Council was close to adopting such a draft resolution on 8 December. More than 100 sponsors stood together behind a ceasefire draft resolution (S/2023/970), formulated by the Group of Arab States and submitted on its behalf by the United Arab Emirates. The "brief, simple and crucial" document, as the authors of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates described it, also contained requirements for humanitarian access and the release of hostages. It reaffirmed the need for full and strict compliance with the norms of international humanitarian law, especially as it relates to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. In other words, the text contained everything that the Secretary-General requested in his unprecedented address to the Security Council (see S/PV.9498).

We commend Abu Dhabi's efforts to prepare and promote that document and the courageous and consistent line of our Emirati colleagues. As a result, their draft resolution was supported by 13 members of the Security Council. However, the United States again, as on 18 October (see S/PV.9442), so as to protect its main ally in the Middle East, vetoed the Security Council's draft resolution, and the United Kingdom abstained in the voting on the text, not having the courage to let Washington stand alone.

Such steps by the Anglo-Saxon team caused the horrific bloodshed to continue, resulting in thousands of deaths and catastrophic destruction. By vetoing a call for a ceasefire, the American side essentially issued a license to kill and now bears full responsibility for every new victim of the conflict in Gaza. The rest of the Security Council, and the United Nations membership as a whole, should not share this guilt with them.

I just returned from a visit to the Rafah crossing with several current and incoming Security Council members, which was organized by the United Arab Emirates and Egypt. We had the opportunity to interact with local authorities, staff of the Egyptian Red Crescent and the Palestinian Red Crescent, representatives of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the United Nations country team, as well as non-governmental organizations. We visited the hospital in El Arish and communicated via video-teleconference with the field

hospital of the United Arab Emirates in Gaza. We also visited a desalination plant on the border with Gaza and, of course, the Rafah crossing.

The trip provided us with a better understanding of what is happening on the Gaza Strip. We saw maimed children in hospitals, a mother with amputated limbs who lost her entire family but gave birth, hundreds of ready-to-ship trucks with humanitarian aid awaiting numerous checks in Egypt, then in Israel, and then again in Egypt, only after which they start to arrive in Gaza “bit by bit”. The humanitarian situation in the Strip is disastrous and is deteriorating by the day, although it is hard to imagine that it could be any worse than it is now. All of our interlocutors said the same

thing — a ceasefire is needed; the massacre must stop. It reminds me of the Nazi blockade of Leningrad during the Second World War, which lasted almost 900 days and claimed the lives of more than 1 million residents, who died from either the bombing or starvation. Is Gaza destined for the same fate? It is inconceivable that this is happening now.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting for this meeting. We shall hear the remaining speakers in explanation of vote on Friday, 15 December, at 3 p.m. in this Hall, to be followed by the resumption of the debate on agenda item 5.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.