



# General Assembly

Seventy-second session

**61**<sup>st</sup> plenary meeting  
Friday, 1 December 2017, 10 a.m.  
New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Lajčák . . . . . (Slovakia)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Hilale (Morocco), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

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

## Agenda item 15

### Culture of peace

#### Draft resolution A/72/L.20

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): Before we proceed to take action on draft resolution A/72/L.20, I should like to inform members that, as indicated in the schedule of plenary meetings and announced in the *Journal of the United Nations*, the General Assembly will hold a debate on this agenda item on Wednesday, 6 December 2017, as originally scheduled.

I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.20.

**Mr. Aboulatta** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation would like to warmly thank the President and his Office for their unstinting efforts since the beginning of the week to prepare draft resolution A/72/L.20, which has been submitted for our consideration today, and which is of crucial importance. We also wish to express our gratitude to all members of the international community for their continued support to Egypt in its fight against terrorism.

The brutal terrorist attack on innocent worshippers Al-Rawdag mosque in the Egyptian city of El Arish last Friday claimed the lives of 310 martyrs, including 27 children, and injured hundreds of others. Although it

was not the first terrorist attack on a place of worship, whether Muslim or Christian, it was the most brutal and egregious attacks to occur in Egypt's modern history.

Regrettably, historic holy sites and other places of worship have been subject to terrorist attacks in other countries of our region. In view of that sad reality, we are more convinced than ever of the need for the international community to make an immediate, unequivocal and united appeal for the categorical rejection of such criminal acts. Furthermore, we must emphasize the need to preserve the inviolability of religious sites and holy places and take all the necessary measures to protect places of worship against malicious terrorist attacks.

As a part of fostering a culture of peace, human values — the values of tolerance, moderation, the rejection of violence, and peaceful coexistence — must be promoted across the globe. The various components of today's draft resolution, entitled "Effects of terrorist acts directed against religious sites on the culture of peace", are based on paragraphs that were agreed on by consensus in various earlier General Assembly resolutions. I shall now present some of those components.

Drawing on resolution 55/254, entitled "Protection of religious sites", we affirm that it is the basic responsibility of the State to protect its people on its own territory. Furthermore, we must condemn all acts or threats of violence, destruction or sabotage against religious sites. Acts of this type continue to be perpetrated throughout the world. But we must also

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unequivocally condemn all terrorist acts, methods and practices, in all of their facets and manifestations, wherever such attacks take place and regardless of who perpetrates them and regardless of their motivation, as they are crimes that can never be justified.

We must also condemn any and all advocacy of religious hatred, discrimination and acts of violence, regardless of the means or medium employed, while reaffirming the importance of strengthening the national capacities of States to fight all forms of international terrorism. Today's draft resolution also urges States to promote the values of tolerance and understanding and reject extremism, while respecting freedom and freedom of belief.

Finally, I wish to thank all the countries of every continent of the world that have expressed their support for the draft resolution, in particular the Group of African States and the brotherly Arab States, in the wake of a terrorist attack that was extraordinary by any measure. This increases our confidence that the Assembly will understand the reasons behind Egypt's introduction of the draft resolution and request for its speedy adoption so that we can send a direct message to terrorists that the world is determined to eliminate terrorism and not surrender to its base goals and targets or its inhumane practices, particularly when it comes to sacred sites and places of worship. We call on the civilized world and all people who love peace and believe in the principles and meaning of peaceful coexistence to unite with us today.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/72/L.20.

Before giving the floor to the speaker in explanation of position before the adoption of the draft resolution, may I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of Ghana.

**Mrs. Pobee** (Ghana): On behalf of the Group of African States, I have the honour to deliver this statement in explanation of position in support of the draft resolution introduced by the Egyptian delegation, entitled "Effects of terrorist acts directed against religious sites on the culture of peace" (A/72/L.20).

The African Group is of the considered view that the draft resolution is an affirmation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, whose core purposes

are to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and maintain international peace and security, which are fundamental prerequisites for nurturing inclusive and peaceful societies that can guarantee the fundamental rights of every individual, as well as the survival of humankind. Sadly, far from achieving that universal goal, our world today is experiencing increasing numbers of acts of terrorism, extremism and fundamentalism, all of which threaten the values, attitudes, traditions, modes of behaviour and ways of life conducive to a culture of peace. These enduring values, as clearly outlined by the General Assembly at its fifty-third session in the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, and subsequently pursued during the ensuing International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, include respect for life, the commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes and conflicts and the elimination of all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, as well as the advancement of mutual respect, understanding, tolerance and solidarity among civilizations, peoples and cultures, including for ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

While the effects of terrorism in terms of economic costs and lives lost are devastating, its impact on the culture of peace is of equal concern and must be carefully evaluated and duly addressed by the international community. The draft resolution under consideration sends a strong message of condemnation of all acts of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, wherever such acts occur and without exception. It renews the commitment of the United Nations to strengthening international cooperation to prevent and effectively combat this scourge.

The heinous terrorist acts on places of worship, religious sites and communities around the world, such as the recent attacks in Egypt and Nigeria, and the resulting loss of innocent lives, should be of concern to the international community, as they are likely to breed further hatred, intolerance and violence if they go unchecked. It is critical that Member States commit to appropriate measures to safeguard the sanctity of places of worship and promote measures that will foster understanding, tolerance and mutual respect in matters relating to religion and religious beliefs. The African Group therefore supports the call for strengthening international cooperation in order to enhance the national capacities of States to prevent and effectively suppress international terrorism.

We reaffirm the decision taken by the General Assembly at its sixty-second session encouraging Member States to consider initiatives for practical action in all sectors and at all levels of society for the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, tolerance, understanding and cooperation. We must devote sufficient attention to this matter and support the inclusion of the question of the effects of terrorist acts directed against religious sites on a culture of peace and in the Secretary-General's forthcoming reports relevant to this issue.

It is often said — and it is worth repeating — that peace is not just the absence of conflict. Peace is more than that, and it requires a positive and dynamic participatory process in all societies, where dialogue is encouraged and conflict resolved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation.

For the reasons I have mentioned, the African Group wishes to urge all delegations to give their full support to the adoption by consensus of this timely draft resolution.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position before the adoption of the draft resolution.

The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/72/L.20, entitled "Effects of terrorist acts directed against religious sites on the culture of peace". I should inform the Assembly that the draft resolution is closed for sponsorship on the e-sponsorship platform.

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 document, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/72/L.20: Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Cambodia, Comoros, Cuba, Gabon, on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of African States, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Viet Nam and the State of Palestine.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/72/L.20?

*Draft resolution A/72/L.20 was adopted (resolution 72/17).*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): Before giving the floor to those wishing to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted, I would like to remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Grant** (Canada): I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to deliver this explanation of position.

Canada would first like to reiterate its deepest condolences to the Government and the people of Egypt for the attack that took place at the Al-Rawdah mosque on 24 November. We condemn it in the strongest terms and stand shoulder to shoulder with Egypt at this difficult time. We will continue to work with the international community to counter terrorism and violent extremism.

We do, however, wish to express reservations with the manner in which resolution 72/17 was submitted and fast-tracked for adoption. Canada was ready to participate in a series of informal consultations to negotiate a consensus text on a critical issue at a critical time, which we believe was the overall goal. However, the consultation process did not unfold in a manner conducive to such an outcome. Although we did indeed join the consensus today, we would like to note the following.

We expressed concern about the fact that the current text removes critical references to human rights from agreed language and instead draws on non-agreed and outdated language and leaves aside key references to human rights. In paragraph 6 in particular, we are concerned about the inclusion of a reference to religious extremism alone. The 2016 resolution on strengthening the ability of the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy recognizes the commitment of all religions to peace and determines to condemn acts of violent extremism conducive to terrorism and incitement to commit terrorist acts that spread hate and threaten lives. The use of religious extremism in resolution 72/17 contradicts that more recently agreed recognition of the shared commitment

to peace on the part of all religions. We therefore cannot in good faith consider the resolution just adopted or its language as precedent.

**Mr. Kravik** (Norway): Like other delegations, Norway would like to express its deepest sympathies and heartfelt condolences to Egypt in the wake of the recent horrific terrorist attack that took place at the Al-Rawdah mosque on 24 November. Norway fully shares Egypt's determination and commitment to combating terrorism and violent extremism. That is why we support today's resolution 72/17, which includes a number of important measures. However, our efforts to eliminate terrorism cannot succeed without a strong human rights framework. We would have appreciated seeing that dimension properly reflected in the resolution.

**Mr. Black** (United States of America): A week ago, more than 300 Egyptians, including women, men and children, were killed while they prayed at the Al-Rawdah mosque in north Sinai, Egypt. The United States condemns that attack in the strongest possible terms. We were shocked, and we continue to extend our deepest sympathies and condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government and the people of Egypt. We reiterate that the international community cannot tolerate the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant or any other barbaric terrorist group or ideology. Today the United States stands in solidarity with Egypt as we reaffirm our shared, unshakable resolve to rid the world of terrorism.

The only way to do that is through unified action. That is why we supported a consensus Security Council press statement in the aftermath of this heinous attack, and that is why we join the consensus today in a demonstration of our commitment to Egypt and to ending terrorism. However, we are disappointed that resolution 72/17 was adopted without the consultations that could have strengthened it and led to broader support. Such consultations could have allowed us to address important issues, such as recognizing and reaffirming that States' counter-terrorism efforts must be carried out in accordance with their international legal obligations, including human rights obligations.

While we understand the desire to move quickly to address that appalling attack, the failure to hold consultations to solicit feedback and the inclusion of unbalanced and non-agreed language means that the United States cannot consider this resolution,

its language or the process by which it was drafted as precedents. Nonetheless, we reiterate our firm solidarity with Egypt and all countries that have suffered from terrorism.

**Mr. Awad** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation joined the consensus on resolution 72/17, on the effects of terrorist acts directed against religious sites on a culture of peace, based on my country's principled and clear position of firm support for all efforts and resolutions aimed at countering terrorism. We have considered the fact that since the crisis began in Syria, seven years ago, it has been one of the very first countries to suffer from the heinous and painful consequences of a phenomenon that some countries are unfortunately confronting today. Terrorist groups have targeted all Syrian institutions, in addition to its infrastructure. They have attacked Syrians in their hospitals, places of worship, including churches and mosques, and educational establishments. They have targeted every ethnic and religious group. Islamist groups have tried to impose their own extremist radical interpretations, practices and ideologies — which have nothing to do with humanity — on the Syrian people, who reject such ideologies and extremist thought.

The escalation of brutal and painful incidents such as the terrorist attacks carried out by Da'esh and the Al-Nusra Front, which is affiliated with Al-Qaida in Syria and other parts of the Arab world and beyond, is proof of the lack of political will to end this scourge. The international community does not have the strength necessary to face those challenges and halt terrorism. Instead, it has adopted double standards in addressing such issues. Many other nations, in particular Western countries and their well-known proxies, have not tried hard enough to put an end to terrorism. We must therefore spare no effort to stop terrorism, extremism and narratives of hatred. We must adopt and implement resolutions and strategies to counter terrorism, including the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the relevant Security Council resolutions. We must avoid politicization and double standards. We must coordinate all counter-terrorism efforts with the countries concerned, because the absence of such cooperation is a violation of their sovereignty, an interference in States' internal affairs and a violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We must promote a culture of peaceful coexistence and an understanding of the other and other civilizations.

My delegation condemns in the strongest terms the heinous attack and massacre launched by terrorist groups in the Sinai, which claimed the lives of dozens of martyrs and injured hundreds of innocent Egyptians. We would also like to express our sincere condolences to the families and friends of the victims and to the people of Egypt. We reaffirm our strong commitment to countering terrorism, which has become a direct challenge to our struggle to remain steadfast in standing up to Western schemes supported by certain countries in the region. We stress the need to make concerted efforts to confront terrorism, which is targeting the present and future of our Arab country, so as to maintain peace and promote the development and advancement of our peoples and nations. In that regard, we stress that all Syrians will continue on the path of combating terrorism. We are determined more than ever to defeat terrorism in every corner of our country. We will rebuild our country so that it is better than before, as we are fully cognizant that it will not prevail unless we defeat terrorism.

**Mr. Zehnder** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland condemns in the strongest terms the horrendous attack in Bir al-Abd, which cost the lives of many innocent victims and wounded many others. We support Egypt in its time of pain and express our most sincere condolences to the families and friends of the victims, and to the Government and the people of Egypt. It is of the utmost importance that those responsible for those crimes be held accountable for their actions. Switzerland fully shares Egypt's pain and indignation in confronting the scourge of terrorism, which the particularly repulsive nature of that cowardly and barbarous attack exemplifies.

Owing to its complexity, the phenomenon of terrorism does not lend itself well to hasty responses. Accordingly, Switzerland regrets that the text of resolution 72/17 did not undergo a consultation process. Switzerland also regrets that much of the language formulated by the international community with regard to combating terrorism was not reflected in the resolution as submitted. That is particularly the case with regard to obligations imposed under international law, including international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international refugee law, for which respect is essential to ensuring the prevention of violent extremism. For those reasons, Switzerland was not in a position to sponsor the text.

Switzerland will persevere in its commitment to preventing and combating all forms of terrorism in accordance with international law, in particular human rights law.

**Mr. De Souza Monteiro** (Brazil): First and foremost, on behalf of the people and the Government of Brazil, I would like to express our deepest condolences to the families and friends of those who lost their lives in the terrorist attack in northern Sinai, Egypt, on 24 November. This heinous, criminal and unjustifiable act directed at persons during a moment of congregation and prayer runs contrary to the shared values of peace, tolerance and respect that constitute the very pillars of the United Nations, and therefore should be condemned and deplored by all countries of the world. Based on that primary concern, Brazil joined the consensus on the adoption of resolution 72/17.

Nevertheless, on behalf of Brazil, I would like to make a few remarks in explanation of my country's position regarding resolution 72/17. We would like to point out that despite the seriousness of the situation that motivated the Egyptian text, it does not seem to be in the best interests of the General Assembly to endorse draft resolutions that are submitted for action by the plenary without providing any opportunity for informal consultations and the indispensable exchange of views and ideas among Member States, which is the very core of multilateralism and essential to the promotion of a culture of peace.

Finally, Brazil regrets that the text of the resolution does not include any reference to fundamentally important concepts related to the promotion of a culture of peace, such as the right to peace, the obligation of States to refrain from the threat or use of force, and the recognition that States must ensure that any measure taken to combat terrorism complies with their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law, while recognizing that peace is not only the absence of conflict, but also requires a positive, dynamic and participatory process in which dialogue is encouraged and conflicts are resolved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation. In our view, those elements would have provided more balance to the resolution, strengthened its contents and reinforced its message.

Brazil reaffirms its commitment to working constructively with all delegations in order to address

any issues of concern. We firmly believe that future initiatives under this agenda item would benefit from a more open and inclusive approach, in line with the idea that dialogue is the essence of a culture of peace and prosperity.

**Mr. Dibaei** (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Islamic Republic of Iran condemns in the strongest possible terms all acts of terrorism, including the recent heinous crime committed during Friday prayers in Egypt. As the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Zarif, stated in his message on the incident,

“[o]nce again the cowardly hand of terrorism targeted the beloved nation of Egypt and proved one more time that terrorism considers no difference between divine and human values as it does not differentiate between places even if they are mosques and place of worship”.

Such a callous attempt by terrorists to prove their continued existence after severe defeats have been inflicted on them in the region doubles the responsibility of the Governments of the region to gain a real and accurate understanding of terrorism and requires their collective efforts to combat it. The Islamic Republic of Iran calls on all Governments to be more vigilant against new plots by defeated terrorists.

**Mr. Heumann** (Israel): Israel would first like to express its deep condolences to the Egyptian people for the heinous terrorist attack that took place. As a country that is not only a neighbour of Egypt, but also one that has unfortunately experienced years of terror from different terrorist groups, such as Hamas and others, we understand and stress once again that we need to stand united against the terrorist threat and combat it together. That is why, once again, we have also joined the consensus on resolution 72/17. Israel would again like to express our condolences to the Egyptian people.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

We will now hear a statement following the adoption of resolution 72/17. I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

**Ms. Adamson** (European Union): I am speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

The EU and its member States are appalled by the atrocious terrorist attack that took place in northern Sinai on the 24 November, taking the lives of more than 300 innocent people. We want to send once more our deepest condolences to the victims — may they rest in peace — their families, and the Egyptian people, and we condemn in the strongest terms this attack that targeted the Friday prayers, which a sacred moment for Muslim believers. As Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, recalled in her statement following the attack, no one should be killed because of their religion and no sacred place should be profaned by violence and terrorism. The EU and its member States will continue to stand with the Egyptian authorities and people, including through capacity-building, in confronting the threats that come from terrorism, and we reiterate that the perpetrators of such unconscionable acts must be held responsible.

With regard to resolution 72/17, which was just adopted, we regret that there was no discussion of the text. We do not want this approach to be repeated or this text to create a precedent. We emphasize that the values of transparency and inclusiveness must guide the preparation of resolutions at the United Nations. On the substance, the text omits important references to international law and human rights, in particular in paragraphs 4, 5 and 6, and is thus unbalanced.

The EU and its member States would like to reiterate that any counter-terrorism activity must be carried out with respect for international law, including international human rights law, and, indeed, this is how we read the text before us. As the recently adopted Human Rights Council resolution 34/8 on the effects of terrorism on the enjoyment of all human rights recalls, the promotion and the protection of human rights for all and the rule of law are essential to the fight against terrorism, and effective counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights are not conflicting goals but complementary and mutually reinforcing.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker for this item. The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 15.

## Reports of the Fifth Committee

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly will now consider the reports of the Fifth Committee on agenda items 134, 139 and 145.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records. Therefore, if there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Fifth Committee that are before the Assembly today.

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote. May I remind members that, under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

“When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting, unless that delegation’s vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee.”

May I also remind delegations that, also in accordance with decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Fifth Committee, unless notified otherwise in advance.

## Agenda items 134 and 145

### Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

#### Report on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

##### Report of the Fifth Committee (A/72/610)

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution entitled “Report on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services”, recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

*The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 72/18).*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 134 and 145.

## Agenda item 139

### Pattern of conferences

##### Report of the Fifth Committee (A/72/611)

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. The text of the draft resolution, for the time being, is contained in document A/C.5/72/L.6.

We will now take action on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

*Draft resolution A/C.5/72/L.6 was adopted (resolution 72/19).*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 139.

*The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.*