



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9499th meeting

Friday, 8 December 2023, 3.30 p.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. De la Gasca López Domínguez (Ecuador)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil	Mr. França Danese
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Ms. Oppong-Ntiri
Japan	Mr. Ishikane
Malta	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Cambodia, the Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, the Comoros, the Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, the Gambia, Grenada, Guyana, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Suriname, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Türkiye, Uganda, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen and Zimbabwe to participate in this meeting.

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

There being no objection, it is so decided.

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

Members of the Council have before them document S/2023/970, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Afghanistan, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, the Plurinational State of

Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Cambodia, the Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, the Comoros, the Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, the Gambia, Grenada, Guyana, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Suriname, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Türkiye, Uganda, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

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

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates): The draft resolution presented by the United Arab Emirates (S/2023/970), which in less than 24 hours garnered the co-sponsorship of at least 97 States Members of the United Nations, is clear in its intention: an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. It reiterates the Security Council's demand that all parties comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, notably with regard to the protection of civilians. It demands the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. And it requests the Secretary-General to report to the Council on an urgent and continual basis on the draft resolution's implementation. It is brief, it is simple, and it is crucial.

The draft resolution echoes the call for a humanitarian ceasefire made by world leaders, humanitarian organizations and, most recently, the Secretary-General in his extraordinary letter (S/2023/962). We have expedited the negotiation process because, after 63 days of conflict and after 18,000 people dead, there is nothing else left to do or say other than to demand this war be brought to an end. The imperative of saving as many lives as possible right now must supersede every other consideration.

The adoption of resolution 2712 (2023) on 15 November mattered, but it was not enough. The bombing of Gaza must stop. Humanitarian aid needs to be delivered at scale, and the lives of scores of civilians, including Israeli hostages, must be protected. I implore all Council members to vote in favour of this draft resolution.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): For two months now, the Security Council has been unable to fulfil its function of maintaining international peace and security and to demand an end to the bloodshed in the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel. There is only one reason for this: the hard-headed, selfish and destructive position of the United States, which, in seeking to protect its ally by any means, is essentially prohibiting the Security Council from intervening. For all that time, the Council members have been forced to listen to Washington saying that it was allegedly working within the bounds of its “quiet diplomacy” and that it would be better for everyone else to stay out of it, while numerous American emissaries travel about Middle Eastern capitals.

The outcome of this “quiet diplomacy” is a cemetery of Palestinian children, which is what Gaza has become: thousands of dead civilians and merciless Israeli bombings that have destroyed hospitals, schools and facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Most importantly, the outcome is an Israel that has been encouraged to activate a new phase of its military operation and is now also planning to flood tunnels in the enclave with sea water, which further threatens more monstrous humanitarian consequences. Yet again, American diplomacy is leaving scorched earth and destruction in its wake.

As our experience shows, it is hard to expect common sense from the current United States Administration. We have no illusions on this front. However, an absolutely exceptional situation has come about, in which we need to act without blinkers on. How are our American colleagues going to explain their actions to their own citizens, hundreds of thousands of whom are coming out to protest in American cities in defence of Palestine, if once again, they block the demand for an immediate ceasefire? How are they going to look their Middle East partners in the eye — partners who today are collectively asking for them to support the draft resolution proposed by the United Arab Emirates

(S/2023/970)? I hope that they realize how this is going to be seen in the region and beyond.

Today the entire world has stood up to defend Gaza from total destruction and to defend its residents from complete extermination. Now our colleagues in the Council definitely need to at last, once and for all, make the right choice and, alongside the overwhelming majority of the progressive international community, support the demand for an end to the violence. Otherwise, they will end up on the wrong side of history, having supported inhumane, barbaric actions, and history will not forgive them.

Since the beginning of the escalation, the Russian Federation has been calling on the Security Council to respond with a demand for an immediate ceasefire. We proposed a draft resolution on this subject (S/2023/772) as early as on 16 October. Unfortunately, owing to the position of Western delegations, it was not adopted (see S/PV.9439). Today is 8 December. Unfortunately, another month and a half has been wasted.

The greatest appreciation should be shown for the courage and professionalism of Arab diplomacy and in particular that of the United Arab Emirates, which have taken it upon itself to prepare such a necessary product calling for a ceasefire. We also note that, in form, it is drafted in the best traditions of the historic decisions of the Security Council on the Middle East. And we can say with confidence that, regardless of the outcomes of today’s vote, Abu Dhabi has already made a contribution to the work of the Security Council that will be remembered for a long time to come.

Our Western colleagues today have one more — perhaps their last — chance to rehabilitate themselves and to vote in favour of the draft resolution that is proposed by the United Arab Emirates on behalf of all of us. We hope that they will take advantage of this opportunity.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

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

Against:

United States of America

Abstaining:

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

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

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

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates): The United Arab Emirates is deeply disappointed about the outcome of today's vote. Regrettably, and in the face of untold misery, the Council is unable to demand a humanitarian ceasefire.

Let me be clear. Against a backdrop of the Secretary-General's grave warnings, the appeals by humanitarian actors and the world's public opinion, the Council is growing isolated. It appears to be untethered from its own founding document. What is the message we are sending Palestinians if we cannot unite behind a call to halt the relentless bombardment of Gaza? Indeed, what is the message we are sending civilians across the world who may find themselves in similar situations?

The disappointing outcome of today's vote will not deter us from continuing to implore Council members to act and bring the violence in Gaza to an end. The Council must unite and act on the war, and the United Arab Emirates will continue to insist it does.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Despite a rushed process and a lack of appropriate consultation by the authors of draft resolution S/2023/970, the United States engaged in good faith on the text. We proposed language with an eye to arriving at a constructive draft resolution that would have reinforced the life-saving diplomacy we have undertaken since 7 October, increased opportunities for humanitarian aid to enter Gaza, encouraged the release of hostages and a resumption of humanitarian pauses and laid a foundation for durable peace. Unfortunately, nearly all of our recommendations were ignored, and the result of the rushed process was an unbalanced draft resolution that was divorced from reality and would not have moved the needle forward on the ground in any concrete way. And so, regretfully, we could not support it.

We still cannot comprehend why the draft resolution's authors declined to include language condemning Hamas's horrific terrorist attack on Israel on 7 October. It was an attack that killed more than 1,200 people — women, children, the elderly and people from a range of nationalities, burned alive, gunned down, subjected to obscene sexual violence. We are very disappointed that the authors offered for the victims of those heinous acts neither their condolences nor a condemnation of their murderers. It is unfathomable. Nor is there any condemnation of the sexual violence unleashed by Hamas on 7 October. Over the past 20 years, the Council has repeatedly underscored the need to take seriously all reports of conflict-related sexual violence. Yet the Council and many of its members have been conspicuously silent in response to reports that Hamas committed acts of sexual and gender-based violence on 7 October. Those incidents must be investigated and condemned, just as they are in any other conflict.

It is equally disappointing that the authors declined to add language reaffirming that the International Committee of the Red Cross must be permitted to access and provide medical treatment for the hostages still being held by Hamas terrorists and other extremists. The draft resolution also fails to encourage a resumption of humanitarian pauses to allow for the release of hostages and an increase in aid. That formula has worked. It could be resumed very quickly if Hamas agreed to release women and civilian hostages.

The text failed to acknowledge that Israel has the right to defend itself against terrorism, consistent with international law. That is a right to which all States are entitled. As I stated earlier today (see S/PV.9498), no country could or should tolerate what Hamas did on 7 October. If any of our own countries had been attacked in that way, we would all expect the Council to reaffirm our right to protect our citizens. Perhaps most unrealistically, the draft resolution retains a call for an unconditional ceasefire. I explained in my remarks earlier today why that was not only unrealistic but dangerous. It would simply leave Hamas in place, able to regroup and repeat what it did on 7 October. A senior Hamas official recently stated that the group intends to repeat the vile acts of 7 October "again and again and again". And yet today's draft resolution essentially says that Israel should just tolerate that, and that it should allow this terror to go unchecked. That is not tenable, it is not realistic, and it is a recipe for disaster

for Israel, the Palestinians and the entire region. As long as Hamas clings to its ideology of destruction, any ceasefire is, at best, temporary and is certainly not peace. Any ceasefire that leaves Hamas in control of Gaza would deny Palestinian civilians the chance to build something better for themselves. For that reason, although the United States strongly supports durable peace, in which Israelis and Palestinians can live in peace and security, we do not support the draft resolution's call for an unsustainable ceasefire that will only plant the seeds for the next war.

Like the other members of the Council, I am heartbroken by the images out of Gaza and the deaths of the many thousands of civilians, including children. Every innocent Palestinian life lost is a tragedy that rips apart families and communities. It goes without saying that the United States supports the renewal of humanitarian pauses to enable the release of humanitarian aid and the provision of additional aid, even as we seek an end to the war, not for just one day or one week, but forever.

Let us be clear. It is the draft resolution's authors' rejection of the United States' sensible, indeed essential, proposals that has deprived the Council of an opportunity to support the tough work necessary to break the cycle of violence and lay the foundation for a more peaceful and secure future. The United States will continue the hard work of diplomacy to free the hostages, increase the protection of civilians, expand humanitarian aid and create an opportunity for Palestinians and Israelis to live side by side, in peace and security.

We also need to redouble our collective efforts to surge humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people and create the conditions necessary for humanitarian assistance to reach people who need it and are in desperate need of food, water and shelter. We are working towards that every day with Israel, Egypt, the United Nations and others. As President Biden reiterated last week, "A two-State solution is the only way to guarantee the long-term security of both the Israeli and the Palestinian people". We will continue to work for that goal, because as Secretary Blinken has said, that is the only way to ensure lasting security for a Jewish and democratic Israel and the only way to ensure that the Palestinians achieve their legitimate aspirations for a State of their own.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): France is extremely concerned about the humanitarian tragedy happening in Gaza. The Secretary-General sounded the alarm, and he was right. That is why France voted in favour of draft resolution S/2023/970 and why we are pleading for a new, immediate and lasting humanitarian truce that can lead to a permanent ceasefire.

For our part, we see no contradiction between the fight against terrorism and the protection of civilians in strict compliance with international humanitarian law. We would have liked to see the Council finally condemn the terrorist attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups on 7 October. Unfortunately, once again, the Council has failed owing to disunity and a refusal to enter into genuine negotiations. In so doing, at a time when the crisis in Gaza is worsening and threatening to spread, the Council has failed to live up to the fundamental mission entrusted to it by the Charter of the United Nations. Nonetheless, France will continue to be resolutely committed to the full mobilization of the Council on all aspects of the crisis — the security, humanitarian and, above all, political aspects.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I begin by thanking the United Arab Emirates for its tireless efforts on the draft resolution (S/2023/970). We deeply regret that the Council was unable to call for an immediate ceasefire, despite the desperate need for one.

In his letter to the Security Council invoking Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations (S/2023/962), the Secretary-General conveyed a clear message: the situation in Gaza is untenable and catastrophic, with hostilities inflicting immeasurable suffering and with public order on the brink of collapse.

As stated earlier today, Malta remains gravely concerned by the crisis that has engulfed the region since Hamas's attacks on 7 October. We reiterate our firm condemnation of Hamas's brutal terror attacks on Israel and its people, including sexual violence and the mutilation of bodies. We continue to reiterate our calls for the release of all hostages immediately, safely and unconditionally, as mandated by resolution 2712 (2023). The full implementation of all provisions of that resolution is now even more critical.

While recognizing Israel's right to protect the population, we emphasize yet again that its military operations must always abide by international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. As was

also stated this morning, the protection of civilians, civilian infrastructure and humanitarian workers must be prioritized. All parties must comply with their obligations under international law. The severely deteriorating humanitarian conditions within Gaza must be urgently addressed. That must include safe and unhindered humanitarian access for United Nations humanitarian agencies and implementing partners to facilitate the provision of essential goods and services to the well-being of civilians, especially children. The adequate scaling-up of the provision of supplies to meet the needs of the civilian population also remains urgent. Those are critical steps that are needed to save lives and to avoid further devastation and the breakdown of public order.

Our diplomatic efforts must be geared towards mitigating the risks of a regional spillover. We must strive to establish a durable foundation of peace and security for Palestinians and Israelis alike. The parameters for that are well known and have become all the more evident in the midst of this horrific crisis. A recommitment to a comprehensive peace for the Middle East that prioritizes the two-State solution has never been more critical.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): We are gravely concerned about the desperate situation in Gaza. The scale of civilian deaths and displacement in Gaza cannot continue.

We welcomed the extended humanitarian pause last month and the release of hostages and humanitarian aid deliveries that took place during it. We call for further and longer pauses to get aid to Palestinians and allow space for further hostage releases.

But we cannot vote in favour of a draft resolution that does not condemn the atrocities Hamas committed against innocent Israeli civilians on 7 October. Calling for a ceasefire ignores the fact that Hamas has committed acts of terror and is still holding civilians hostage. Israel needs to be able to address the threat posed by Hamas, and it needs to do so in a manner that abides by international humanitarian law, so that such an attack can never be carried out again and so that we can work meaningfully towards a two-State solution that delivers statehood for Palestinians, security for Israel and peace for people on both sides. That is why we abstained in the voting on the draft resolution (S/2023/970).

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): We all had the opportunity to express our full positions

this morning (see S/PV.9498), so allow me to just add the following.

Switzerland voted in favour of the draft resolution presented by the United Arab Emirates (S/2023/970) in the knowledge that a humanitarian ceasefire is understood as a time-limited humanitarian pause, without prejudicing Israel's right to ensure its defence and security. Switzerland regrets the fact that the draft resolution was not adopted.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China joins others in thanking the United Arab Emirates for its tireless efforts in drafting the draft resolution (S/2023/970).

At the core of the draft resolution submitted by the United Arab Emirates on behalf of Arab countries is the request for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and for all hostages to be released. The draft has nearly 100 co-sponsors, including China. We express great disappointment and regret that the draft resolution has been vetoed by the United States.

Two months of fighting has already caused unprecedented death and destruction. An immediate ceasefire is the overriding prerequisite. On the issue, any negative attitude is untenable and any attempt at justification is feeble. It needs to be pointed out that condoning the continuation of the fighting while claiming to care about the lives and safety of people in Gaza and the humanitarian needs there is self-contradictory. Condoning the continuation of the fighting while advocating the prevention of a spillover of the conflict is self-deceiving. Condoning the continuation of the fighting while making special mention of the protection of women and girls and of human rights is extremely hypocritical. All of the above demonstrates yet again the double standards at play.

Although the draft resolution has been vetoed, the international community's strong calls for a ceasefire, an end to the fighting, the protection of civilians and the prevention of a greater humanitarian disaster will not subside. The efforts of the Security Council to uphold justice and fulfil its duties will not stop.

We urge Israel to heed the call of the international community and stop its collective punishment of the people in Gaza. We support further diplomatic mediation to promote the early release of all people held captive. We call on all relevant parties to pool all efforts towards the common goal of ending the fighting in Gaza in order to

keep alive the hope of survival for the Palestinian people and the hope of peace in the Middle East.

Ms. Oppong-Ntiri (Ghana): We thank the delegation of the United Arab Emirates for proposing draft resolution S/2023/970. Ghana voted in favour of the draft resolution because we believe that the humanitarian situation in Gaza is rapidly deteriorating and has to be urgently addressed to avoid a human catastrophe. While acknowledging the international community's overwhelming desire for an immediate and unconditional humanitarian ceasefire, we believe that the draft resolution could have included a condemnation of the heinous attacks perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October. As a Council, we need to ensure that our draft resolutions address all the underlying issues at hand in order to maintain the Council's objectivity and its credibility in acting as an honest broker for a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian question based on a two-State solution.

In conclusion, while we regret that the draft resolution was not adopted, we reaffirm our commitment to a two-State solution and express the hope that the Council can take future actions that will help save lives.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I think it would be no exaggeration to say that this day is one of the darkest in the history of the Middle East. By once again cynically blocking a call for a ceasefire in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict zone, our colleagues from the United States have literally, before our eyes, issued a death sentence to thousands, if not tens of thousands, more civilians in Palestine and Israel, including women and children, as well as the United Nations staff who are trying to help them. History will judge Washington's actions. They can make as many cynical, beautiful, empty speeches about democracy, human rights, women and peace and security, some rules or other, some order or other, as they like. However, we witnessed the real value of those words just now, when two members of the Security Council chose to remain complicit in Israel's merciless bloodbath.

I am not saying these words to shame our American colleagues. I am sure that the outcome of our vote has reverberated in the hearts of ordinary people in the United States and the United Kingdom, whose calls for peace and common sense have gone unheeded by the ruling elites of those countries. I am confident that they will now have their say. Nothing remains for us to do in the Council other than to redouble or triple our efforts

to try to reach a decision that can alleviate the suffering of civilians — within the limited, toothless framework that we have left to act in, thanks to Washington and London. It is important to ensure the implementation of the Council's resolution 2712 (2023), regardless of how we view it. We expect the Secretary-General to make proposals about how to organize the monitoring of its implementation as soon as possible. We hope that at least something will be able to be done within that framework.

As we have previously proposed, one of the other options could be to expand the mandate of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization. Besides that, we expect that the General Assembly will once again weigh in. We cannot and must not leave innocent Palestinians and Israelis at the mercy of those for whom war is a geopolitical game and a source of enrichment.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): More than two months have passed since Hamas's terror attack on Israel on 7 October, followed by Israel's massive military response. After several failed attempts, the Security Council finally spoke on 15 November through its adoption of resolution 2712 (2023). After that, a hopeful week-long humanitarian pause in the fighting allowed more emergency aid to enter through the Rafah crossing and more than 100 hostages to be released. However, after the pause broke down, the situation deteriorated rapidly, with new rounds of deaths, displacement and destruction. It is clear that more must be done.

We voted in favour of draft resolution S/2023/970, as the loss of civilian life that we are witnessing now — Palestinian or Israeli — is tragic. In the current situation, Japan also takes very seriously the Secretary-General's invocation of Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations. We therefore regret that the draft resolution failed to be adopted. However, we need to recall that the country that vetoed it is engaging in enormous diplomatic efforts to make a tangible difference in improving the humanitarian situation on the ground. That is why we need more joint and unceasing efforts to find common ground from which the Council can work together for the people of Palestine, as well as those in Israel and beyond, rather than indulging in finger-pointing. In that regard, I was therefore disappointed by the statement made by the speaker immediately preceding me.

Though this is a disappointing outcome, Japan will work constructively with other Council members to find a path forward.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): Albania voted in favour of draft resolution S/2023/970, on a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, introduced by the United Arab Emirates, joining the call of the Secretary-General and the United Nations agencies to end the hostilities on the ground so that humanitarian access can be delivered to the population in Gaza and to all the civilians suffering in this conflict. We strongly support the draft resolution's clear focus on the protection of civilians and the implementation of international humanitarian law.

Let us be clear. We support the call for a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza to save civilians — not to shield Hamas or other terrorists. It therefore cannot and must not be seen and misused by Hamas as a new opportunity for regrouping and attacking Israel and its population. It has been doing that since the 7 October terrorist attack, and the Security Council has not reacted to condemn it. It is therefore important for the Council to start thinking quickly about how to hold Hamas accountable for the terrorist attacks of 7 October, for the hostages who have not yet been freed, for the sexual violence it has used as a weapon of terror and for the huge damage it has done to the Palestinian cause. The people of Gaza should reject Hamas and embrace the path of peace as the only way to build their future. And the only way to do that is to secure Israel's right to exist and its security, on the one hand, and for Palestinians to have their own State and freedom, on the other.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Gabon voted in favour of draft resolution S/2023/970, submitted to us this evening at the initiative of the United Arab Emirates. We did so out of a sense of responsibility, because it is time to stop the murderous violence and intolerable bloodshed among the civilian population. The Security Council once again failed to move beyond its divisions to respond unanimously to the chaotic situation being endured by civilians, women and children in the ruins of Gaza. To our great regret, there will be no ceasefire tonight in the war between Israel and Hamas. There will be no echo on the ground in response to today's exceptional and unprecedented appeal by the Secretary-General through his invocation of Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations, which calls for urgent and coordinated action to save human lives. I am talking about the lives of thousands of children and women who have no recourse to

anything other than international humanitarian law and the decisions of the Council.

The Council must draw on the humanity of each of its members to show that it has intensified its engagement and to bring an end to the hostilities in Gaza. The Council must step up its efforts to justify and live up to its vocation and mandate to stop wars, if not prevent them. The Council must overcome differences when faced with tragedy, because it reflects the universal conscience. There must always be a place in this Chamber for the rejection of horror, whoever the perpetrators may be. There must always be a place in this Chamber for the respect of international humanitarian law. There must always be a seat around this table from which to call for a humanitarian ceasefire, and we must very promptly return to that seat and assume the full weight of our responsibilities.

Mr. França Danese (Brazil): Brazil voted in favour of the draft resolution proposed by the United Arab Emirates on behalf of the Group of Arab States (S/2023/970), which we also co-sponsored. We regret that it did not receive the necessary approval, despite the 13 votes in its favour.

The unprecedented level of the humanitarian tragedy unfolding in Gaza requires urgent action. It continues to be our responsibility to prevent it. That should have been done by now, by the Council demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, the easing of humanitarian aid and the immediate and unconditional release of all the hostages. Without that, the Security Council risks complicity in allowing further human loss. Sooner or later, Council members must shoulder their responsibility and do what is right. That is not just Brazil's call — they are the demands of public conscience, the dictates of humanity. The price of inaction is unbearably high politically, morally and legally. We might be irreparably harming the prospect of a two-State solution.

Brazil will continue to work with Council members with a view to re-establishing the conditions for humanitarian action to resume in Gaza. We must also be consequential in our defence of international law, particularly international humanitarian law, with meaningful action. There is a pressing need to re-establish Council authority, which should be guided by our collective responsibility to ensure peace and security without making exceptions. Now that we have failed once again, maybe we could try a more

effective negotiating process, which will place the full responsibility of a draft resolution on all Member States.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): Mozambique deeply regrets that, despite the efforts made by the Security Council, it was not able to reach a consensus and adopt the draft resolution before us (S/2023/970), which was meant to address the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Mozambique voted in favour of the draft resolution, hoping that it would lead to an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, thereby mitigating the suffering of civilians in the Gaza Strip. The concerning humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the suffering of the Palestinian civilian population cannot be simply ignored by anyone and most certainly not by the Council. As previously emphasized, there is an imperative for all parties to comply with their obligations and international law, including international humanitarian law, to protect the population and civilian infrastructure. Mozambique commends the United Arab Emirates for their efforts to seek a mutually agreed resolution to the conflict and to contribute towards peace and security in the Middle East, particularly between Israel and Palestine. We also extend our gratitude and unwavering support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to address the conflict in accordance with Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations.

We reaffirm our full support for the efforts aimed at the cessation of hostilities and the implementation of the two-State solution in the interest of peace and security between Israel and Palestine, fostering good-neighbourly relations and promoting regional harmony, all in accordance with the principles of the Charter.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in explanation of vote in my capacity as the representative of Ecuador.

As the President of Ecuador, Daniel Noboa Azín, said yesterday during his visit to the United Nations, our country will always be in favour of peace, a ceasefire and putting an end to violence, not only in Gaza but in any other area or territory of the world. It is no coincidence that he is our President and that he presided over the Security Council yesterday (see S/PV.9497).

We reiterate our full condemnation of the terrorist acts against friendly countries such as Israel, and we believe that every civilian who has died in Israel or Palestine since 7 October represents a tragedy that

makes it more necessary to move towards peace. We feel that we must act urgently to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe, which, as the Secretary-General is warning, could have irreversible consequences for peace and security in the entire region. That is why we voted in favour of the draft resolution that we have just considered (S/2023/970), which called for a humanitarian ceasefire to alleviate the situation for the civilian population and for an immediate and unconditional release of all of the hostages. What other decision could we take, as the country presiding over the body in charge of maintaining international peace and security? We did so, furthermore, in the firm belief that both peoples deserve to live in peace, with security and dignity, which can only be achieved through a peaceful, negotiated, definitive and just solution for the parties, with the existence of two States, Palestine and Israel, on the basis of the 1967 borders and relevant resolutions.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): This is the moment of truth. This is a turning point in history, and it is beyond regrettable — it is disastrous — that the Security Council was again prevented from rising to the moment to uphold its clear responsibilities in the face of the grave crisis threatening human lives and regional and international peace and security. Millions of Palestinian lives hang in the balance. Every single one of them is sacred and worth saving.

Instead of allowing the Council to uphold its mandate by finally making a clear call, after two months of massacres, for the atrocities to end, the war criminals are now given more time to perpetuate their crimes. How can that be justified? How can anyone justify the slaughter of an entire people? Those who are advocating for the prolongation of the assault on the one hand, while also pleading against the commission of atrocities on the other, should be convinced by now that the prolongation of this war obviously implies the continued commission of atrocities, the loss of more innocent lives and more destruction. They are inherently linked. That is the way Israel conducts its war — through atrocities.

Hundreds of people will be killed by this time tomorrow, then hundreds more and then thousands. Children will be killed, orphaned, wounded or disabled

for life, not by mistake but by design, because the killers have no regard whatsoever for Palestinian life, from the cradle to the grave and beyond. Even the killed are now stacked in mass graves or left for days and weeks under the rubble, without the dignity of a burial. More shouts of people still alive will come from under the rubble, asking to be saved. The humanitarian catastrophe will reach new and terrifying depths. Who can justify this? Who can tolerate witnessing more of these horrors and allowing them to continue? In Gaza, 2.3 million Palestinians are paying with their lives the price for double standards, bias, racism, Israeli exceptionalism and supremacy. Whoever is against the destruction and displacement of the Palestinian people must stand against this war. And whoever supports it is enabling this destruction and displacement, regardless of their intentions or efforts. Only the outcome matters when so many lives are at stake. Whoever is against war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide must stand against this war. And whoever supports it is enabling war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, regardless of their intentions or efforts. Only the outcome matters when so many lives are at stake.

Finally, let me thank the 100 countries that, in less than a day's time, rallied to co-sponsor draft resolution S/2023/970. The number of supporting countries has increased since my brother from the United Arab Emirates referred it to the Council. I also want to thank the members of the Security Council that, with courage

and a sense of humanity and human decency, voted in favour of the draft resolution. I thank all 13 members that did so, including you, Mr. President.

Together with all States that have taken a clear and principled stance, with the Secretary-General, with civil society and with peoples around the world who are with us in solidarity, we will spare no effort to put an end to the slaughter of our people. We will make every effort to hold those responsible accountable. We will never relent in our efforts to uphold international law, nor will we ever relent in championing the rights of our people and defending our just cause. What is happening these days will have a decisive impact on the fate of our region, as well as on the understanding and perception of every country and relations among communities, peoples and nations around the world.

This is a terrible day for the Security Council. We reject this result and will continue resorting to every legitimate avenue to stop these abhorrent atrocities, including by resuming the emergency session of the General Assembly. We demand a ceasefire to save lives. Every further day means lives lost and people killed at an unprecedented pace in modern history. It means barbarism prevailing and humanity abandoned. Humanity must prevail now — for the sake of the Palestinian people in Gaza and for the sake of humanity.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.