



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9453rd meeting

Wednesday, 25 October 2023, 3.40 p.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Vieira (Brazil)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Mrs. Ngyema Ndong
Ghana	Ms. Oppong-Ntiri
Japan	Mr. Ishikane
Malta	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield/Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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

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

Members of the Council have before them documents S/2023/792 and S/2023/795, each of which contains the text of a separate draft resolution.

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

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): Last week, I said that the Council needed to let diplomacy play out and that we needed to give Secretary-General Guterres, President Biden and Secretary Blinken, as well as regional leaders, the chance to move progress forward (see S/PV.9442). Over the past few days, we have seen the fruits of that diplomacy. Thanks to the leadership of the United Nations, the United States, Israel, Egypt and other countries and partners, humanitarian aid has started to reach Gaza.

However, much more help is needed. The United States will continue to work with our partners to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian relief into Gaza. This draft resolution (S/2023/792) will support that effort. Our text calls for the rapid expansion of aid delivery. We must do everything in our power to meet the dire humanitarian needs of the Palestinians in Gaza.

We also welcome the release over the past few days of four people who were being held hostage by Hamas. We thank Qatar and Egypt for their mediation efforts. But roughly 200 people are not yet free. We heard yesterday, in this very Chamber, how so many families still do not know the whereabouts or conditions of their loved ones (see S/PV.9451). Parents lie awake at night wondering if they will ever see their child again. Yesterday I met with two of those parents, Rachel Goldberg and Jon Polin. Their 23-year-old

son, Hersh — an American citizen — was seriously injured and taken hostage by Hamas. No parent should have to experience that kind of agony and pain. It is heartbreaking, and it is infuriating. A vote for this draft resolution (S/2023/792) sends the message that every single hostage must be released immediately, without conditions.

This moment is a test for all of us — for the international community and for the Council itself. The United States has worked to forge a consensus around a draft resolution that is strong and balanced. We solicited input. We listened. We engaged with all Council members to incorporate edits, including language on humanitarian pauses and the protection of civilians fleeing conflict and language on the importance of deconfliction mechanisms to protect United Nations facilities and personnel. Those are important additions to the text — ones that we support and ones that we should all support. This draft resolution (S/2023/792) also reflects input from numerous humanitarian organizations working to save lives.

The United States was not interested in putting forward a draft resolution just to put forward a draft resolution. We were determined to craft a draft resolution that would enjoy broad support, reflect the facts on the ground and bolster the work of the United Nations and the urgent, direct diplomacy that the vast majority of Council members support.

Our approach stands in stark contrast to Russia's. Russia has put forward a draft resolution (S/2023/795) at the very last minute with zero consultation. I will note that when putting together our draft resolution (S/2023/792), we gave Russia's feedback the same consideration we gave to that of other Council members. The bottom line is this: Russia has offered up yet another draft resolution in bad faith and the Council should not stand for it. Instead, we should come together around the draft resolution proposed by the United States — a resolution that not only includes but also builds on many elements of the draft resolution that Brazil put forward last week (S/2023/773).

Our draft resolution unequivocally condemns the heinous terrorist attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups. It affirms the right of Member States to defend themselves against the threat to peace and security posed by acts of terrorism. It urges all parties to fully respect and comply with their obligations under international law. It underscores the need to protect

civilians and humanitarian workers, including United Nations officials and medical personnel. It calls for all measures, specifically humanitarian pauses, to allow for full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access. It stresses that Member States must take concrete steps to prevent an expansion of the conflict beyond Gaza. It underscores the need to work together to deprive Hamas of the funding and weapons it uses to spread terror. It makes clear that we must continue to work towards a future in which two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace. That is clearly not what Hamas wants to see.

The United States worked exhaustively to draft a strong and balanced text that meets the present moment, and we urge all Council members to vote in favour of it.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): For two weeks now, the Security Council has been unable to send a collective signal for de-escalation in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict zone. That is extremely lamentable. The bloodshed continues, with thousands of civilians killed or wounded and more than 1.5 million people internally displaced. Let us take a moment to reflect on those monstrous numbers.

Russia proposed the adoption of a draft resolution calling for a humanitarian ceasefire (S/2023/772) on 16 October. It was a short, depoliticized and entirely humanitarian text. Unfortunately, it was not supported by the majority of Council members (see S/PV.9439). National interests — frankly speaking, self-centred ideological and political interests — prevailed over the aim of stopping the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe.

Exactly one week ago (see S/PV.9442), the United States blocked the Council's second attempt to produce a response to the horrific crisis by vetoing the humanitarian draft resolution prepared by Brazil (S/2023/773). Moreover, the United States was the only member to vote against the amendments we proposed calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the condemnation of all indiscriminate attacks on civilians (S/2023/775 and S/2023/776). That made it clear that the United States simply does not want the decisions of the Security Council to influence in any way a possible ground offensive by Israel against Gaza. Such an offensive, accompanied by gross violations of international humanitarian law, would risk provoking an even larger-scale conflict in the region and perhaps even beyond.

Now, in an attempt to muffle the international community's harsh criticism of its use of the veto, the United States is trying to push through a new draft resolution full of politicized, inappropriate and extremely dubious provisions (S/2023/792). I would like to point out separately that there was no normal consultative process for the draft resolution in the Council, despite the fact that our American colleague has just assured us to the contrary. The sponsors ignored virtually all the comments made by delegations, as well as the Council's established practice for working on draft documents. The United States delegation explicitly denied other Council members the opportunity to consult with their capitals by setting unrealistic deadlines.

It is therefore not surprising that the final product fell short of even the most minimal standards. It still does not include a call for a ceasefire or a condemnation of the indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian objects in Gaza. It does not oppose any actions designed to forcibly displace civilians. It is a thoroughly politicized document whose sole purpose is not to save civilians but to secure United States political precepts in the region by applying its own particular labels. The authors of the draft resolution resorted to a tactical ploy by stuffing their text with a haphazard set of humanitarian measures that Israel could take in conducting its ground offensive. However, they of course made sure that nothing in the draft would prevent West Jerusalem from carrying that offensive out. The United States draft resolution is essentially a licence from the Security Council for Israel to do just that, while thousands of Palestinian children continue to die. The Council cannot be tied to such a draft resolution, whose adoption would discredit it utterly. My American colleague mentioned the many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are providing assistance. I would like to point out that the first thing that the NGOs and humanitarian organizations that want to help are asking for is a ceasefire.

A separate and major legal problem for the draft resolution is its reference to Israel's right to self-defence, which, as confirmed by the International Court of Justice's 2004 advisory opinion on the *Legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the occupied Palestinian territory* (see A/ES-10/273), is inapplicable in the case of an occupying Power, which is what Israel is with regard to the Palestinian territory. We see no point in supporting a document that is designed for one purpose and one purpose only — to

serve the geopolitical interests of one of the members of the Council. The document does not merely fail to stop an escalation, it actually gives it a green light, leaving room only for further forceful steps to be taken alongside toothless humanitarian conditions. We hope that most of our Council colleagues will take the same action as we will on this draft resolution. Otherwise, as I said, it would be an extremely serious blow to the Council's authority.

In order to nonetheless enable the Council to fulfil its mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security, we have prepared an alternative draft resolution (S/2023/795). It is based on trusted humanitarian language and incorporates the most useful elements from the United States draft resolution, as well as the previous draft resolutions of Brazil (S/2023/773) and Russia (S/2023/772). We see no reason for the members of the Security Council to refuse to support it — unless a ceasefire and stopping this new wave of violence have no place in their plans. This is the Council's last chance to fulfil the noble functions entrusted to it, and we call on everyone not to miss it.

The President: The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolutions before it.

I shall first put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/2023/792, submitted by the United States of America.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Albania, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Against:

China, Russian Federation, United Arab Emirates

Abstaining:

Brazil, Mozambique

The President: The draft resolution received 10 votes in favour, 3 against and 2 abstentions. The draft resolution has not been 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.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): The United States is deeply disappointed that Russia and China vetoed draft resolution S/2023/792,

which, as I have said, was strong, balanced and the product of consultations among the members of the Security Council. We listened to everyone, we incorporated feedback and we worked to forge consensus around a draft resolution that would send a clear message to the world — and most importantly, to Israelis and Palestinians — that the Council is determined to meet this moment.

We should not encourage Russia's cynical and irresponsible behaviour by voting in favour of its text, draft resolution S/2023/795, which, as I said earlier, was offered up at the very last minute, with zero consultation, and which contains a number of problematic sections. Though today's vote was a setback, we must not be deterred. The United States stands by its draft text. And we stand ready to work with all Member States to support the efforts of the Secretary-General, President Biden and Secretary Blinken, in cooperation with many countries around this table and in the region, to build a more peaceful and secure future for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China voted against draft resolution S/2023/792. Our position is based on facts, law, conscience, justice and the urgent calls of the entire world, in particular the Arab countries.

We all recall that last Wednesday, draft resolution S/2023/773, which focused on the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, emphasized the protection of civilians and was supported by an overwhelming majority of members of the Security Council, failed to be adopted owing to the use of the veto (see S/PV.9442). On Saturday evening, the United States introduced a new draft resolution that set aside the consensus of the members and included many elements that were still deeply divisive and went far beyond the humanitarian realm. Many Council members, including China, Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Brazil, proposed amendments to the text. However, the sponsor, ignoring the major concerns of relevant members, made only cosmetic changes to the draft resolution before the text was put in blue in order to rush the Council to vote on it. In terms of its content, the draft resolution is seriously unbalanced and confuses right and wrong. In terms of its approach, it was introduced in haste and lacked the consensus it needed. In terms of effectiveness, it does not reflect the world's very strong calls for a ceasefire and an end to the fighting, and it does not help resolve the issue. Based on the above, the draft resolution is evidently not in a position to be adopted.

China in no way opposes that the Security Council take action. On the contrary, we have always strongly called on the Council to play a responsible role. What we object to is that the draft resolution is evasive on the most pressing issue of ending the fighting and never calls for an immediate ceasefire in clear and unambiguous language. At this moment, a ceasefire is not only a diplomatic term, but means the life and death of many more civilians. It is irresponsible and extremely dangerous for a Security Council resolution to be ambiguous on issues of war and peace. It is tantamount to paving the way for large-scale military action and giving a green light to further escalation of war.

China is by no means indifferent to acts that harm civilians. On the contrary, we immediately and strongly condemn all violence and attacks against civilians and call for diplomatic efforts to promote the early release of the hostages. What we object to is that the draft resolution does not call on the parties concerned to stop the indiscriminate and asymmetric use of force, nor does it require a thorough investigation into the heinous attack on Al Ahli Hospital. This selective application of international law and these double standards will only push more innocent civilians to the brink of death.

China is by no means indifferent to the suffering of the people in Gaza. On the contrary, China has consistently made strong calls for the opening of relief corridors, ensuring humanitarian access and avoiding a humanitarian disaster. What we object to is that the draft resolution selectively avoids referring to the root causes of the current humanitarian crisis in Gaza and fails to urge Israel to lift its comprehensive blockade of Gaza and to rescind the evacuation order in northern Gaza. Such an evasive approach will only accelerate Gaza's descent into an even greater humanitarian disaster.

China in no way denies Israel's security concerns. On the contrary, we have always strongly advocated paying equal attention to the security concerns and legitimate rights of both Israel and Palestine. What we oppose is that the draft resolution attempts to establish a new narrative on the Palestinian-Israeli issue, ignoring the fact that the Palestinian territories have been occupied for a long time, and avoids the fundamental issue of independent statehood for the Palestinian people. It is alarming that the draft resolution deviates from the spirit of previous United Nations resolutions and embeds the dangerous logic of confrontation of civilizations and the justification of war and the use of

force. If adopted, the draft resolution will completely ruin the prospects for the realization of the two-State solution and plunge the Palestinian and Israeli people into a vicious cycle of hatred and confrontation.

Based on that, China will vote in favour of the draft resolution proposed by the Russian Federation (S/2023/795).

China has no selfish interests on the question of Palestine. Any initiative that contributes to peace will receive China's staunch support. China will do its best to advance any endeavour that facilitates Palestinian-Israeli reconciliation. Since the outbreak of a new round of conflict between Palestine and Israel, China has actively advocated that the Security Council take meaningful action and make binding decisions on the situation between Palestine and Israel as soon as possible. We also emphasize that the actions and decisions of the Security Council must respect historical facts, take the correct direction, and reflect due responsibility and a will to rise to the occasion so as to ensure that they can withstand the test of morality and conscience. We are ready to continue to work with the members of the Security Council and the international community to play a constructive role in putting an end to the fighting, protecting civilians, avoiding greater humanitarian disasters and achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): We thank the United States for their work and genuine efforts in narrowing the differences as much as possible in order to respond to the urgency of the situation on the ground. We welcomed the balanced draft resolution (S/2023/792), which condemns the terrorist attack of Hamas and calls for the liberation of hostages, expresses sympathy for all innocent victims, reaffirms the right of States to self-defence, in compliance with the obligations under international law and calls for the protection of civilians and for humanitarian pauses and humanitarian corridors in order to ensure unhindered humanitarian aid to those in need. It also welcomes the efforts of all regional and international actors to avoid a spillover and reaffirms the commitment to a political solution to the Middle East conflict. Albania deeply regrets that the draft resolution was vetoed.

We know that perfection is the enemy of good. There are times when the urgency of the matter and the complexity of the issue requires swift action and for doing the best possible under the given circumstances,

even though one would have liked and hoped for more. This draft resolution was certainly one of those cases because there is a time to draw a line in order to make actions matter and have the impact we are seeking. The United States draft resolution may not have been ideal. We supported it as an improved and reasonable way forward at this time, at this very particular moment, responding to critical issues and urgent needs as the best possible way to condemn terrorism and to respond to the urgency to protect civilians and ensure humanitarian aid on the ground. We therefore deeply regret that the Security Council was prevented from deciding on a text that provides for the urgently needed humanitarian pauses and humanitarian corridors.

This veto will not help the people in Gaza. It will not help those taken hostage. It will not help humanitarian workers, and it will not make it easier for the United Nations on the ground. And as the Security Council proves unable to take the right decisions, we know the result — Hamas and other terrorists and extremist groups will feel empowered because there is no internationally agreed condemnation and there is no global sanctioning of the unacceptable.

Despite these successive failures, we must not lose hope. We cannot renounce because it is not only our job, it is our responsibility. We will continue to work in good faith to have the Council act on this critical issue in a balanced and fair manner and discharge its responsibilities, but also maintain its deeply affected credibility.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We voted in favour of draft resolution S/2023/792, which we have just considered in the Council. It was introduced after a negotiating process in which many members of the Council participated. The resulting draft resolution contains elements of great urgency and relevance. For example, it reaffirms the obligation to respect and comply fully with all obligations under international law, international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law. The draft resolution also requests that all necessary measures be adopted, especially a humanitarian pause, in order to allow for full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access, and indicates that humanitarian and medical personnel must be respected and protected. States have a right to defend their population and to self-defence but must respect the principles of international humanitarian law at all times. We believe that this was clearly set out in the draft resolution.

I am convinced that each and every member of the Council believes that the text could be improved upon, but I am also fully convinced that we are not all going to agree on what part needs to be improved or how to do it. It will not help us to seek a perfect text when it is far too late or when it becomes irrelevant. As I pointed out last Wednesday (see S/PV.9442), we are convinced that the Council must not remain silent in view of clear threats to international peace and security, with ever-worsening humanitarian consequences. We therefore deplore the fact that once again, in less than a week, we have been unable to adopt a majority decision in the Council because of the use of the veto.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): Japan voted in favour of the draft resolution proposed by the United States (S/2023/792), in the hope that it would help improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza and prevent further deterioration. It is therefore our deep regret that the draft resolution was not adopted.

We must ensure that humanitarian aid reaches those desperately in need and that draft resolution would have taken measurable steps to those ends. In fact, it contains many important and positive elements for addressing the humanitarian situation in Gaza, which is deteriorating as never before. We cannot agree with the argument that the draft resolution could be construed as something that gives the green light to unlawful acts. I ask those who have any doubt about that to please read it carefully themselves.

We are grateful for the ongoing diplomatic outreach of key actors, including the United States, towards de-escalation. We also stress that civilian and humanitarian facilities must be protected by all parties, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

In conclusion, it is important that the Council remain engaged on this file and be ready to act whenever necessary. The world is counting on us.

The President: I shall now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/2023/795, submitted by the Russian Federation, the Republic of the Sudan and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

A vote was taken by a show of hands.

In favour:

China, Gabon, Russian Federation, United Arab Emirates

Against:

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Switzerland

The President: The draft resolution received 4 votes in favour, 2 against and 9 abstentions. The draft resolution has not been adopted, having failed to obtain the required number of votes.

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

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We regret the fact that the Security Council has once again failed to take the opportunity to respond to the unprecedented crisis in the Middle East.

I have already provided a detailed account of the reasons why the draft resolution submitted by the United States (S/2023/792) is absolutely unacceptable to us.

It is very unfortunate that Council members, while remaining fixated on their national agendas, did not have the courage to show strategic wisdom and support the draft resolution proposed by Russia (S/2023/795). Our Albanian colleague, who lamented the lack of condemnation of the terrorist attacks, had an opportunity to rectify that by voting in favour of the draft resolution. Apparently, he did not read it carefully enough to see all the relevant elements, the inclusion of which he had requested in his customary emotional manner.

We regret the fact that the Security Council has not lived up to expectations. We tried our best to help. The task of preventing further escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is now up to the General Assembly. We support the relevant draft resolution proposed by Jordan on behalf of the Group of Arab States, which we co-sponsored, and we call on all Member States to support that document.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I will keep this short, because frankly it is not worth wasting any more time discussing Russia's bad-faith draft resolution (S/2023/795).

The United States could not support yet another Russian draft resolution that was put forward with no consultation and failed to reflect the realities on the ground. It is disappointing that Russia would rather

try and score political points and further divide the Council than address the current urgent needs of Israelis and Palestinians.

We all see that Russia is doing nothing to engage any of the relevant parties or to support diplomatic efforts, including by the United Nations, to get more aid into Gaza. We will say this again — the United States stands ready to work with all Member States that are genuinely committed to advancing peace and security. We must put the interests of the region and the world above all else.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): The votes of the United Arab Emirates today were made strictly on the merit of the draft resolutions submitted to the Security Council (S/2023/792 and S/2023/795) and how they tangibly respond to the dire situation in Gaza. We know what the most pressing humanitarian needs are. The United Nations and non-governmental organizations have made them very clear — an immediate humanitarian ceasefire; the release of all hostages; safe, sustained and at-scale humanitarian access; fuel for hospitals and desalination plants; water; and adherence to international humanitarian law.

Yesterday we heard dozens of statements imploring the Council to assign the same value to Palestinian life as it does to Israeli life. We cannot allow any equivocation on that point — there is no hierarchy of civilian lives. The needs I mentioned must be the priorities for any resolution adopted by the Council.

Furthermore, we cannot be silent on the question of forced displacement and the evacuation order. Crucially, the Gaza Strip is occupied territory. There should be no ambiguity about that. We still hope that forging consensus is possible, but it is clear it will require more work. The stakes are too high. Civilians in Gaza cannot be abandoned. The Security Council must step up, as we heard clearly from countless foreign ministers just yesterday, and that is the work to which the United Arab Emirates will turn now.

Mrs. Ngyema Ndong (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Gabon voted in favour of the draft resolutions submitted by the United States delegation (S/2023/792) and the Russian delegation (S/2023/795), respectively, to express our support for the Palestinian people and for the Israeli people and our commitment to peace. That commitment to peace and the protection of civilians also led us to vote in favour of the draft resolutions submitted by Russia (S/2023/772) and Brazil (S/2023/773), on 16 and 18 October, respectively.

With today's vote, my country reaffirms its support for any initiative that enables human lives to be saved. Elements that will improve the fate of civilians and ensure de-escalation are set out in both the draft resolutions on which action was taken today, which Gabon supported, including the condemnation of the Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel on 7 October; the need to respect international law, ensure the safety of civilians and civilian infrastructure, and protect humanitarian workers and goods; the importance of a continuous, adequate and unhindered supply of essential goods and services for civilians in Gaza; the need for the immediate release of all hostages, without conditions; the commitment to a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and the commitment to a two-State solution.

We regret that the antagonism within the Council and the lack of unity prevented us from arriving at a consensus text. We are aware that the texts presented do not take into account all legitimate concerns, but Gabon believes that the draft resolutions contain elements that can make a difference on the ground, in particular with regard to the humanitarian situation.

The acts of terror perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October triggered the resumption of large-scale hostilities on Israeli soil in Gaza and the occupied West Bank. All the indiscriminate bombardments that followed have led to an escalation of violence, with tragic consequences for the civilian populations and the stability of the region, and they demand a response from our Council.

Once again, Gabon urges all parties to exercise restraint and respect their obligations under international humanitarian law. Unimpeded and sustained access, a cessation of orders for the forced displacement of the people of Gaza, the opening of humanitarian corridors and the unconditional release of hostages will undoubtedly contribute to the calm we all seek. At the same time, we reiterate our call for the blockade of Gaza to be lifted and for a cessation of hostilities that will put an end to the despair of men, women and children who are now confronting death.

We support the Israeli victims. It is crucial that those responsible for the violence perpetrated by Hamas be brought to justice for their actions.

We will never stop repeating that the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is political and that diplomacy, negotiation and dialogue are the only weapons available to the international community to

ensure that the legitimate concerns of all parties, self-determination and the right to security are respected and that peace and security for the Palestinian and Israeli people are guaranteed.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): We regret that draft resolution S/2023/792, proposed by the United States was not adopted. The text would have had a real impact on the ground by calling for hostages to be released and for aid to get in, including through humanitarian pauses. Through the draft resolution, the Security Council would have rightly, and for the first time, unequivocally condemned Hamas's terrorist attacks.

The United Kingdom could not support draft resolution S/2023/795, proposed by Russia, which once again failed to recognize Israel's right to self-defence.

As so many of us have said, there is a grave crisis unfolding in the Middle East. The Russian text was put to a vote without a single minute of consultation with the Council members. It was not a serious attempt to have the Council speak with one voice.

We are committed to continuing to work across the Council towards a balanced text that condemns Hamas, reaffirms Israel's right to defend itself, is clear on the need for everything to be done to protect civilians in line with international humanitarian law and gets more aid flowing into Gaza.

Ms. Oppong-Ntiri (Ghana): We regret that once again the veto has been used to prevent the Council from shouldering its responsibilities in a critical situation that demands decisive action.

The trajectory of the ongoing war between the State of Israel and Hamas is simply not sustainable and could engulf the entire region if we do not effectively mobilize as a Council. The civilian cost so far is unacceptable and more human suffering will occur if we do not act.

It is for that reason that we are deeply saddened by the Council's continuing inability to positively influence events on the ground by speaking with one voice to protect civilians and to stop the bloodshed. Indeed, Ghana had hoped that United States-sponsored draft resolution S/2023/792, which, as a Council, we had worked on over the weekend to improve the humanitarian language, including clear references to humanitarian pauses, could have garnered Council support.

While we supported draft resolution, we still believe that the order for civilians and United Nations staff to evacuate all areas in Gaza north of Wadi Gaza and to relocate to southern Gaza needs to be rescinded to save human lives.

We thank the Russian Federation for its draft resolution S/2023/795. However, we would have wished for more time to consider the various proposals.

In conclusion, we reiterate our call for all efforts to be directed towards de-escalating the rising tensions and for our actions to be guided by humanitarian considerations even in this difficult and tragic moment.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): Efforts at this very juncture should be focused on the humanitarian problems that continue to deteriorate. From that viewpoint, the Russian draft resolution S/2023/795 contains important elements. We note the incorporation of language from draft resolution S/2023/773, submitted by Brazil, and draft resolution S/2023/792, submitted by the United States.

At the same time, the Council, which has the primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security, should refer to practical measures that could deter and prevent heinous terror attacks, such as the prevention of arms exports or disrupting financing.

We also think it is important for every Member State — every Member State — to recognize the right to defend itself and its people. Every Member State, without distinction has such right, which has to be exercised in full compliance with international law.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): As I said yesterday (see S/PV.9451), the Council must not become an arena for rivalries among its members but rather a space for reconciliation and international peace and security.

The Council's draft resolutions must be understood as tools that contribute to achieving our collective goals. They must not be an end in themselves, much less become political or media trophies.

The text of a draft resolution must not be decided simply by the will of a single member, without allowing any comments from the others. Negotiations in good faith must be the basis of any product of the Council. To not respect that principle would create a very dangerous precedent. For that and no other reason, we abstained in the voting.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): The situation in the Middle East calls for united and urgent action by the Council. We have all talked about this since the shocking and unjustifiable acts of terror perpetrated by Hamas against innocent Israeli civilians on 7 October, which we firmly condemn.

Our priorities are the protection of civilians, rapid and unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza, the immediate release of hostages and using our influence on the parties to prevent further escalation or even the spread of the conflict in the region.

Switzerland voted in favour of draft resolution S/2023/792, proposed by the United States, because in our view it represented a first step for the Council towards achieving those priorities, even if we would urge for clearer language, in particular on the protection of civilians. Switzerland abstained in the voting on the text presented by Russia (draft resolution S/2023/795) in the absence of a consultative process and of an intention to reach a consensus on the substance. Such a consultative process would have enabled us to submit alternative proposals for some important elements, including how to mention the tragic events linked to the Al Ahli Hospital.

Switzerland recognizes Israel's legitimate desire for self-defence and national security. We deplore the deaths of thousands of civilians — including thousands of children — in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in Gaza. It is regrettable that the Council has once again been unable to reach a consensus in order to demonstrate its unity in confronting these principles and the intensity of a crisis that still risks spilling over into the entire region. Leaving aside the non-adoption of the draft resolutions today, Switzerland reiterates that the parties must respect international humanitarian law, in particular the principles regarding the conduct of hostilities — the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution.

The permanent members of the Council have the power of the veto, which gives them a special and heightened responsibility regarding the maintenance of international peace and security. We expect them to shoulder their responsibilities and to lead a constructive and inclusive process. Switzerland remains ready to support every effort by the members of the Council and their partners to use their influence on the parties to bring a swift end to the conflict.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): As the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, Catherine Colonna, said before the Security Council yesterday (see S/PV.9451), the situation in the Middle East is very dangerous, and is at risk of spilling over into a conflagration. The Council must therefore act and uphold its responsibilities. It must unambiguously condemn the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel and call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. Lastly, it must call for safe and unhindered access for humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza. The Council must also recall that Israel has a right and a duty to defend itself while respecting international law and particularly international humanitarian law. France calls for the establishment of a humanitarian pause, which could help bring about a ceasefire. It is absolutely essential for all civilians to be protected.

That is the reason that France voted in favour of draft resolution S/2023/792, put to a vote by the United States. France abstained in the voting on draft resolution S/2023/795, put forward by the Russian Federation, because several essential elements were lacking. In particular, the text did not characterize the Hamas attack as a terrorist attack. Moreover, we regret that it was not opened for negotiations.

After today's unfortunate failure, France will continue, as it has always done, to be committed in good faith to ensuring that the Council upholds its responsibilities. It is our collective duty to redesign a political horizon that can meet the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, whom Hamas does not represent. The conditions for a lasting peace are well known. They are essential guarantees for the security of Israel and a State for the Palestinians. That is the line that France defends firmly and will continue to defend.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 10 elected members of the Security Council (E10).

We regret that once again the Council has not been able to exercise its mandate. Confronted as we are by escalating conflict, a dire humanitarian situation and the loss of civilian lives, our responsibilities remain clear and present. The Council is obliged to maintain international peace and security and to do its utmost to safeguard the lives of civilians. We also call for the immediate and unconditional release of all the remaining hostages. The E10 remains firm in its belief that we must urgently and genuinely address the

humanitarian crisis in Gaza, whose population is on the brink of calamity. Hundreds of thousands of civilians, including children, have been displaced. Thousands have been killed and injured. We cannot add to their suffering through our inability to find an agreement on a draft resolution that is desperately needed. The parties involved must allow aid in, according to their obligation under international law. We must promote every and all mechanisms that can contribute to ensuring that assistance reaches all who are in need throughout Gaza. Possible options include a humanitarian ceasefire, humanitarian pauses and humanitarian corridors. We must ensure the provision of essential goods and services at scale and in a sustained manner, including water, fuel, food, electricity and medical supplies. We also want to remind everyone that civilians are protected under international law, and we call for their safe movement and the protection of civilian objects that are indispensable for the civilian population.

While we welcome the current efforts to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza through Rafah and commend all partners involved, we note that the current volume of aid is utterly inadequate when assessed against the population's actual needs. The crisis is also gripped by a growing risk of regional spillover, which demands our undivided attention. We must mitigate those risks by urging all the parties to exercise restraint, de-escalate and respect the norms of international law. It is for that reason that the E10 will be working on a new draft proposal in the coming days. As elected members of the Council, we also represent the rest of the international community, and we have a duty and an obligation to act. There is no time to waste.

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

Mr. Erdan (Israel): I would like to begin by expressing our deep gratitude to the United States and every other member of the Security Council that supported draft resolution S/2023/792. Voting for a draft resolution that clearly condemns savage genocidal terrorists while standing up for a Member State's right to defend itself against terror shows that despite all the libellous falsehoods that are spread in the halls of the United Nations, there are still those who stand up for the values of freedom and security. I thank those members for their moral clarity in such dark times.

To those who voted against the draft resolution, I must say that their decision shocks me to the core. In Israel we are fighting for our very survival. My elderly

parents living in Ashkelon have spent the past 20 days running back and forth to bomb shelters as rockets rain down on them — deliberately on them, on civilians. Are those members unable to condemn even deliberate attacks on civilians perpetrated by terror organizations? If any of their countries were subjected to a similar massacre, I am certain that they would act with much greater force — much greater force — than Israel. There would be no question in their minds that such barbaric slaughter would require a broad military operation against the terrorists who committed such inhumane atrocities — an operation to eradicate their terrorism capabilities in order to make sure that such atrocities can never happen again. How would Moscow react if terrorist death squads wiped out entire neighbourhoods in Moscow? How would Beijing respond if genocidal jihadists beheaded and murdered its babies? I will give them a moment to reflect on that thought. However, I believe that every person — not only here in this Chamber but across the globe, whoever is watching this discussion — knows exactly how it would respond, so we do not need a moment to reflect. Were the Security Council not to condemn the terrorists and their crimes against its members' innocent civilians, each of them would be just as shaken as I am. They would feel that there is a blatant double standard, that the international community is blind to their agony, and that the Council is not taking even the most basic steps that anyone with a slight moral compass should take. That is precisely how the State of Israel feels right now.

Those who voted against the United States-led draft resolution (S/2023/792) have shown the world that the Council is incapable of doing the most basic task of condemning Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS)-like terrorists and that it cannot affirm the right to self-defence of the victim of those heinous crimes. Israel has been attacked and continues to be attacked. That is a fact. In the south by Hamas and in the north by Hizbullah — what a surprise.

Meanwhile, the other draft resolution, the Russian draft resolution voted upon today (S/2023/795), sought to tie Israel's hands, preventing us from eliminating a threat to our existence and permitting the genocidal terrorists to regroup so that they can massacre us again. The absurdity of calling on Israel to rescind the call for a temporary evacuation is truly unbelievable and goes against every value that the Council represents. By demanding that Israel call on Gazans to return north, that draft resolution would serve only to maximize civilian casualties and not to mitigate them. Why would Israel ask Gazans to return to an active war zone?

We cherish life and take every measure to minimize civilian fatalities and casualties. We are not fighting the Palestinians. We are fighting only the Hamas ISIS terrorists. Civilians should never be deliberately put in harm's way. Furthermore, the alternative draft resolution, the Russian draft resolution (S/2023/795), makes no mention of our right to self-defence and no mention of Hizbullah, the terrorist force on Israel's northern border that has spent the past weeks firing rockets, mortars and anti-tank missiles at Israeli towns and cities for no reason. Would Moscow or Beijing be given a right to self-defence if faced with the same threat? I believe so.

Finally, if this other draft resolution (S/2023/795) truly focused on the humanitarian situation — as it was presented the first time — the more than 220 hostages being held by Hamas would not appear as a general sidenote at the very end of the draft resolution; instead, their release would be the first demand. The hostages held by Hamas must be the top humanitarian priority of the international community. Their well-being should come before aiding the supporters of the terrorists who abducted them. Despite the wording of the draft resolution submitted by Russia, there can never be any false immoral comparisons between the Hamas savages and the law-abiding democracy of Israel. Israel is fighting sheer evil, and that should be crystal clear to every person in this Chamber. Hamas has perpetrated the most barbaric massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. Hamas is solely responsible for the Palestinians' situation in Gaza. Hamas is committing crimes against humanity. In the wake of the Holocaust, we collectively swore — never again. That was one of the main reasons the United Nations was established. Never again is now — we must not forget that.

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

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to say a few words in response to what has just been said by the Permanent Representative of Israel. The Permanent Representative of Israel posed a rhetorical question: what would Moscow do if there were terrorist attacks on the Russian Federation? The response to that question is very clear. Russia has encountered international terrorism in the past, for example, during the events in Chechnya at the end of the 1990s and 2000s. At that time, many people sitting here in this Chamber told us that we were not dealing with

international terrorism but with a national liberation movement, and they urged us to talk to the Chechens. We talked to the Chechens later. But we did not talk to the terrorists, we destroyed them. We were also targeted in terrorist attacks during the Budyonnovsk campaign, when the terrorists occupied a hospital; in Dubrovka, where they took over a cinema; in a school in Beslan, where they killed a huge number of innocent children.

I would like to draw the Permanent Representative of Israel's attention to the fact that our statements and our draft resolutions contain a condemnation of terrorism and expressions of sympathy with the rightful rage of Israel regarding the deaths of its civilians. We are currently being confronted with terrorist acts as well, and we do not talk to terrorists. We talked to the Chechens, and as a result Chechnya is now a peaceful Russian Republic that is an integral part of the Russian Federation; indeed, the Chechens participate in Russia's special military operation and fully support the Russian Government. That is what it means to talk to the people, but we did not talk to the Chechen terrorists. We are not asking Israel to reject a fight with terrorism but rather to fight terrorists and not civilians. That is what we mean, and we are not in any way denying Israel's right to protect itself from terrorist attacks. I ask Israel to please bear that in mind when deciding to comment on our statements in future.

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

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I will be brief. I would like to say to the Permanent Representative of Israel only that it was not my intention to have a debate with Israel, and that Israel, in treating China as

a rival, may have picked the wrong target. He should be aware that from the very start of this round of conflict between Palestine and Israel, China has unequivocally condemned all acts that harm civilians in violation of international law. When we refer to civilians, they include both Palestinian and Israeli civilians.

The Permanent Representative of Israel made some comments regarding today's draft resolutions (S/2023/792 and S/2023/795). I would like to remind him that just last week, there was a draft resolution before the Council (S/2023/773) that contained elements condemning Hamas attacks. China voted in favour of that draft resolution. However, it was vetoed (see S/PV. 9442).

In my earlier statement, I made it abundantly clear that China is absolutely not denying Israel's legitimate security concerns. However, we emphasize the need to pay equal attention to the legitimate security concerns and the legitimate rights of both Palestine and Israel. In the current circumstances, while trying to deal appropriately with this round of the conflict between Palestine and Israel, we cannot deny that the Palestinian people's rights have not been properly guaranteed for a very long time, and we believe that root cause of the conflict lies in the fact that the issue of a two-State solution has not been properly settled. Therefore, I hope that we will all be honest, respect the facts, uphold justice and join forces to tackle the current issues effectively and chart a path whereby both Palestinians and Israelis can live in harmony, tranquillity, peace and happiness.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.