



# General Assembly

Seventy-fifth session

**98<sup>th</sup>** plenary meeting  
Tuesday, 17 August 2021, 10 a.m.  
New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Bozkir ..... (Turkey)

*In the absence of the President, Ms. Mudallali (Lebanon), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

## Agenda item 145 (continued)

### Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

**The Acting President:** Before proceeding to the items on our agenda, I would like, in keeping with established practice, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/75/661/Add.5, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/75/661/Add.4, the Central African Republic has made the payment necessary to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes due note of the information contained in document A/75/661/Add.5?

*It was so decided.*

## Agenda item 131 (continued)

### Global health and foreign policy

#### Draft resolution (A/75/L.120)

#### Draft amendment (A/75/L.124)

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom to introduce

the draft amendment to draft resolution A/75/L.120 contained in document A/75/L.124.

**Mr. Roscoe** (United Kingdom): As ever, we are very grateful to the co-facilitators, Japan and Guyana, for all of their work on the text of draft resolution A/75/L.120, and we look forward to the high-level meeting on universal health coverage in 2023. But in proposing draft amendment A/75/L.124 today we come back to the fundamental question of how the General Assembly regulates the participation of civil society in our high-level meetings.

We have voted four times now on what the General Assembly thinks is a good solution, and that solution is in operative paragraph 10 of the draft resolution before us. As it stands, the paragraph provides for the following process. It enables the President of the General Assembly to provide us, the General Assembly, with a list of relevant civil-society organizations. Of course, he already does this in consultation with the Secretariat. If Member States wish to object to the participation of one of the civil-society organizations on that list, they can make it known to the Assembly and we can take a final decision on whether that organization can participate. This process puts decision-making in all of our hands, not the hands of a single Member State or the Secretariat. It also means that we get to hear from the civil-society organizations that we want to hear from, and we get to exclude those that we do not think are appropriate. It is a good system. We voted for it four times. It is in operative paragraph 10.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



With the support of several countries, today we are proposing — and this is our draft amendment — to delete operative paragraph 11. We are doing it because operative paragraph 11 represents a departure from the approach set out in operative paragraph 10, and in doing so it seeks to take away decision-making power from the General Assembly. To be clear, this paragraph, a new paragraph with new language, has been inserted into the draft resolution at the behest of the 30-odd States that have consistently voted against operative paragraph 10. They vote against it because they do not like civil society, and they want to be able to control civil society's access to our meetings. Their objective is clear. We are of the view — and again, this is why we wish to delete operative paragraph 11 — that operative paragraph 11 is confusing and ambiguous. If I may, I will briefly read it out.

“Requests the Secretariat to assist the President of the General Assembly, with the support of other relevant entities of the United Nations system, as appropriate, particularly the World Health Organization, in drawing up the list referred to in paragraph 10 above, through screening and evaluation of the requests to ensure relevance to attend the high-level meeting”.

Now, I think the question for us is who the “relevant entities” are. What is “appropriate”? Critically, what is the mechanism for screening and evaluation? What is the standard for relevance? Who is making these judgments on our behalf? We know from our own experience on HIV/AIDS that we are perfectly capable of making these judgments ourselves. The paragraph inserts an unnecessary step into the process. It creates confusion and unnecessary work for the Secretariat, and ultimately undermines the role of the General Assembly. So I want to remind members that the language in operative paragraph 10 is our language. It is the language found in all three of the most recent consensus modality resolutions. Operative paragraph 11 is yet another attempt to degrade the language in operative paragraph 10 in order to take power and decisions out of our hands and give them to others. I therefore urge members to stick to the existing position. We call on Member States to support our draft amendment so that we can hear from all the relevant voices in our fight for universal health coverage. We depend on that support. Please vote in favour of our amendment.

**The Acting President:** We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/75/L.120 and the draft

amendment contained in document A/75/L.124. In that connection, I would like to give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): This oral statement is made in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

Under the terms of operative paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 14 of draft resolution A/75/L.120, in operative paragraph 1 the General Assembly would decide that the one-day high-level meeting on universal health coverage to be convened by the President of the General Assembly shall be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on the third day of the general debate of the Assembly at its seventy-eighth session, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and consist of an opening segment, a plenary segment for general discussion, two multi-stakeholder panels and a brief closing segment.

In operative paragraph 2, the General Assembly decides that the opening segment, to be held from 10 a.m. to 10.30 a.m., will feature statements by the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session, the Secretary-General, the Director-General of the World Health Organization and the President of the World Bank Group, as well as an eminent high-level champion of universal health coverage, selected, in consultation with Member States, by the President of the General Assembly, giving due consideration to gender balance. The plenary segment, to be held from 10.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m., will consist of statements by Member States and observers of the General Assembly. A list of speakers will be established in accordance with established practices of the Assembly, and the time limits for their statements will be three minutes for individual delegations and five minutes for statements made on behalf of a group of States. The closing segment, to be held from 5.30 p.m. to 6 p.m., will consist of summaries of the multi-stakeholder panels and concluding remarks by the President of the General Assembly.

In operative paragraph 3, the Assembly further decides that the organizational arrangements for the two multi-stakeholder panels will be as follows. Two multi-stakeholder panels will be held in parallel to the plenary segment, one from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and the other from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Each of the two multi-stakeholder panels will be co-chaired by two representatives, one from a developed and one from a developing country, to be appointed by the President of

the General Assembly from among the Heads of State and Government attending the high-level meeting, in consultation with Member States, taking into account gender balance, level of development and geographical representation. The themes of the multi-stakeholder panels will take into consideration the direction and outcomes of other, preceding, health processes and initiatives, as well as the interactive multi-stakeholder hearing, with a view to ensuring the most effective and efficient outcomes and potential deliverables and to sharing experiences and lessons learned to address any remaining implementation gaps. The President of the General Assembly may invite parliamentarians, local Governments, the heads or senior representatives of relevant United Nations entities, including the World Health Organization and the World Bank, development partners, civil society, the private sector, academia, medical associations, indigenous leadership, representative organizations of persons with disabilities and community organizers to serve as speakers on the panels, taking into account gender balance, level of development, geopolitical representation and the representation of youth and older people.

In operative paragraph 14, the Assembly decides that the proceedings of the high-level meeting and the multi-stakeholder hearing shall be webcast, and encourages the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General and the Director-General of the World Health Organization to give the highest visibility to the high-level meeting through all relevant media platforms and information and communications technologies.

With regard to operative paragraphs 1 and 2 of the draft resolution, it is currently envisaged that the one-day high-level meeting on universal health coverage, to be held in New York in 2023, would consist of three meetings, if the meetings are held in-person without significant virtual components, or four meetings if the meetings are in a virtual or hybrid format, with interpretation in all six official languages. Those would constitute an addition to the meetings workload for the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management in 2023 whereby additional requirements for meeting services would arise in the amount of \$22,000. Furthermore, with regard to operative paragraphs 1 and 3 of the draft resolution, it is envisaged that the two multi-stakeholder panels to be held in parallel with the plenary segment of the high-level meeting would consist of two meetings (either in-person, or in virtual or hybrid format), with

interpretation in all six official languages. They would constitute an addition to the meetings workload for the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management in 2023 whereby additional requirements for meeting services would arise in the amount of \$11,000.

Also, with regard to operative paragraph 14 of the draft resolution, the proceedings of the high-level meeting and the multi-stakeholder hearing would require resources for webcast services, including United Nations Television and Video and press coverage, in the amount of \$13,700. Accordingly, should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/75/L.120, additional resource requirements currently estimated in the amounts of \$33,000, under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, and \$13,700, under section 28, Global communications, would be included in the proposed programme budget for 2023.

The statement I just read was distributed through the Plenary Place on the e-deleGATE portal and will be made available in *The Journal of the United Nations* under the e-statement link for this meeting.

**The Acting President:** Before we proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.120 and draft amendment A/75/L.124, delegations wishing to make a statement in explanation of vote or position on the draft resolution, the draft amendment or both are invited to do so now in one intervention.

Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the voting, I would like to remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana):** I am making this statement on behalf of Ambassador Kimihiro Ishikane of Japan and myself.

At the outset we would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for entrusting us with the responsibility to serve as co-facilitators and conduct intergovernmental consultations on the modalities of the high-level meeting on universal health coverage, to be held in 2023 in New York. The high-level meeting will undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of the 2019 political declaration on “Universal health coverage: moving together to build a healthier world”, in order to identify gaps and solutions

so as to accelerate progress towards the achievement of universal health coverage by 2030.

Over the past year and a half, the need for accelerated action on universal health coverage has become even more pronounced because of the coronavirus disease pandemic. Strong health systems built to deliver universal health coverage and supported by sufficient financial and human resources are fundamental to ensuring the highest standard attainable of physical and mental health for all, including as a critical defence against disease outbreaks. Even before the pandemic, the world was off the track needed to meet Sustainable Development Goal target 3.8 on universal health coverage, with at least half of the world's population unable to access the essential health services they needed, and approximately 100 million people being pushed into poverty each year due to catastrophic health-care expenditure, a situation further compounded by the pandemic. The high-level meeting in 2023 will provide an opportunity to thoroughly examine the impact of the pandemic on health systems and discuss the actions needed to build stronger health systems and ultimately achieve universal health coverage.

Draft resolution A/75/L.120, presented for adoption today, is a procedural text that outlines the scope, modalities and format of the follow-up meeting. It provides for a format similar to that of the 2019 high-level meeting, with a general debate and parallel multi-stakeholder panels. Unlike the schedule in the 2019 modalities resolution (resolution 73/131), the time frame for the plenary segment will run from 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. without a break, in an effort to enable more Member States to address the meeting and in recognition of recent challenges in that regard.

The high-level meeting will approve a political declaration agreed on in advance by consensus. To ensure relevance, the zero draft calls for preparations, including around the theme and substance of the panels, to be finalized during the seventy-seventh session, closer to the date of the meeting. Recognizing the critical contribution of stakeholders across sectors to the attainment of universal health coverage, the draft resolution seeks to bring together Governments, academia, civil society, the private sector and other professional groups in order to align our agendas and actions toward common goals.

The paragraphs in the draft resolution related to the participation of civil society and non-governmental

organizations were indeed the most actively discussed during the consultations. As facilitators we listened keenly to the views of all delegations, and we consider that the combination of operative paragraphs 10 and 11 represents the best balance of the different positions. Operative paragraph 10 is the most recent language used in the modalities resolutions for the participation of civil-society organizations, whereby the General Assembly makes the final decision on participation from a list prepared by the President of the Assembly of representatives of relevant non-governmental and civil-society organizations, academic institutions and the private sector. A new paragraph, operative paragraph 11, has been added, which factually describes how the list in operative paragraph 10 is prepared. Specifically, the list is to be drawn up by the President of the General Assembly with the support of the Secretariat and the relevant United Nations entities, particularly the World Health Organization, following screening and evaluation to determine the proposed participants' relevance for attending the meeting. Operative paragraph 11 is a proposal made by the facilitators that emanates from discussions with the relevant United Nations entities. We reiterate that it is a factual representation of how the list of relevant civil-society organizations is prepared. It only stipulates the criterion of relevance, which is also stated in operative paragraph 10.

It should be noted that silence was broken on both paragraphs and there were extensive discussions with the delegations concerned. It is our fervent hope that this draft resolution, which sets the tone for a very important meeting on universal health coverage, will be adopted by consensus and that delegations will support the text as presented by the facilitators, without amendment. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all delegations for their active engagement and participation throughout the process.

**Mr. Varganov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the delegations of the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Republic of Belarus, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Republic of Cuba, we are compelled to express our disagreement with draft amendment A/75/L.124.

Operative paragraph 11 of draft resolution A/75/L.120, on the scope, modalities, format and organization of the high-level meeting on universal health coverage, does not introduce any new realities into the preparatory process for the event. The



paragraph merely records the well-established and decades-old practice of considering applications to attend high-level meetings of the General Assembly from non-governmental partners without consultative status within the Economic and Social Council. Its purpose is to provide transparency in the creation of the initial list of non-governmental bodies, which will describe the above-mentioned process clearly and completely rather than selectively.

It should be emphasized that operative paragraph 11 cannot result in any restrictions on the involvement of specialized non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the high-level meeting, since it does not introduce any additional procedures or selection criteria. The review of applications for the initial NGO list is in the hands of the Secretariat and the Office of the President of the General Assembly, and they are expected to ensure its alignment with United Nations principles. Similar formulations are provided for the organization of United Nations conferences in Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31, which is the basis for our Organization's relationship with NGOs. I would like to point out that operational paragraph 11 is already a compromise. Unfortunately, due to pressure from a number of delegations during the negotiations, the wording on respecting the goals and principles of the Charter of the United Nations was deleted. However, even after that change, the paragraph still contributes to the transparency of the process. We thank the co-facilitators, the Ambassadors of Guyana and Japan, for their efforts to find mutually acceptable solutions in a spirit of neutrality, impartiality and consideration of the interests of all. We regret that despite the constructive attitude shown by many delegations, the sponsors of the draft amendment made a choice that does not promote balanced, mutually acceptable solutions. We consider this to be a missed opportunity to settle contradictions surrounding the issue in the Assembly.

We ask you to put the draft amendment to a vote, Madam President, and we call on Member States to vote against it.

**Ms. Jurečko** (Slovenia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its 27 member States. The candidate countries North Macedonia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

We would like to thank the President of the General Assembly and the co-facilitators, Japan and Guyana, for their efforts.

Agreeing on the modalities for the high-level meeting today is an important milestone for the high-level meeting on universal health coverage, and we therefore welcome draft resolution A/75/L.120. I would like to turn to the importance of civil-society participation in the high-level meeting, which is a high priority for the European Union and the reason why together with others, in a broad cross-regional initiative, we have sponsored draft amendment A/75/L.124, requesting the deletion of operative paragraph 11. In our view, the language in operative paragraph 11 was not previously agreed on and, frankly, was not properly negotiated. Although the EU voiced strong concerns about the paragraph and requested further consultations when breaking the silence, no further meaningful engagement took place. Operative paragraph 11 creates a new role for the Secretariat in screening civil-society organization applicants that is inconsistent with previous practice.

Furthermore, the EU believes that the language is extremely vague and creates many unanswered questions. It neither specifies the basis and criteria for the evaluation nor what the consequences of such a screening and evaluation process are to be. That is not acceptable when dealing with such an important question and potentially limiting the scope of the General Assembly's decision-making on the matter. The EU feels that this particular paragraph attempts to detract from and weaken the highly important language on civil-society participation in operative paragraph 10. Operative paragraph 10 clearly states that the Office of the President of the General Assembly puts forward the list of civil-society organizations. Member States then have an opportunity to consider the list, after which the General Assembly debates and decides on the matter. It is a perfect intergovernmental process accompanied by intergovernmental decision-making. We note that operative paragraph 10 has already proven its functionality. It has not only been adopted in various previous modalities resolutions but has also been tested in practice, and it has shown clearly that it works. We can see an example of that in the context of the high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS held in June (see A/75/PV.74), enabling an open and transparent process that produced a final decision on the list of civil-society organizations for the General Assembly.

Operative paragraph 11, however, re-establishes a veil of secrecy over the process through its ambiguous language and unclear implications with regard to the list presented to the Assembly. The EU and its member States, together with many other delegations, have consistently raised strong concerns about rejections of civil-society organizations that have been exercised in an arbitrary manner. We cannot accept the unclear pre-screening processes that would be introduced through operative paragraph 11 and that might undermine the transparency of the intergovernmental decision-making process according to operative paragraph 10.

Universal health coverage is a matter of concern to all. It is fundamental not only to meeting Sustainable Development Goal 3 but also to the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment and many other goals across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Furthermore, universal health coverage is crucial to ensuring the right of every human being, without discrimination of any kind, to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The activities of civil-society organizations have played a crucial role and made extensive contributions in this area, as demonstrated by their active participation in the 2019 high-level meeting on universal health coverage and the Africa Health Agenda International Conference 2021. Civil-society organizations like the more than 850 organizations under the Civil Society Engagement Mechanism for Universal Health Coverage 2030 influence decision-making through advocacy, provide essential capacity-building in the global South and represent the voice of marginalized and vulnerable people.

The high-level meeting will discuss how to achieve universal health coverage, ensuring that all individuals and communities have access to the quality essential health services they need without suffering financial hardship. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which, among other things, has threatened and hindered the ability of health systems to provide other essential health services in many countries around the world, has demonstrated that this discussion has become increasingly important. To ensure that we are informed, we need to hear experiences from all involved. We cannot afford to let important experiences go unheard. We cannot afford to miss out on the support of any stakeholder when it comes to universal health

coverage. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that when it comes to health, this is very much indeed an issue that belongs to all. Deleting operative paragraph 11 constitutes a return to recently agreed modalities for high-level meetings and well-established modalities of previous years in the United Nations.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

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

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft amendment, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors of draft amendment A/75/L.124: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Ukraine.

**The Acting President:** Before we proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.120, in accordance with rule 90 of the rules of procedure, the Assembly shall first take a decision on draft amendment A/75/L.124. A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

*Against:*

Algeria, Barbados, Belarus, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, Cameroon, China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Philippines, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zimbabwe

*Abstaining:*

Angola, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Cabo Verde, Chile, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mongolia, Namibia, Nepal, Oman, Paraguay, Peru, Rwanda, Senegal, Sudan, Suriname, Togo, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Yemen, Zambia

*Draft amendment A/75/L.124 was adopted by 64 votes to 43, with 33 abstentions.*

**The Acting President:** I give the floor to the representative of China to introduce an oral amendment to draft resolution A/75/L.120.

**Mrs. Xu Daizhu (China):** I have the honour to introduce an oral amendment to operative paragraph 10 of draft resolution A/75/L.120 jointly proposed by the Republic of Belarus, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and my own country, China.

Our proposal is to delete the last part of operative paragraph 10, which reads

“and to bring the list to the attention of the Assembly for a final decision by the Assembly on participation in the high-level meeting”.

The whole paragraph would therefore end after the words “non-objection basis”.

We thank the Permanent Representatives of Guyana and Japan for their efforts as the co-facilitators of the draft resolution and look forward to the upcoming high-

level meeting to renew our commitment to achieving universal health coverage and promoting the welfare of all. We always welcome and appreciate the important contribution that civil society makes, including through non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in engaging constructively with Member States and the United Nations system, and are glad to see that around 6,000 NGOs are currently enjoying active consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

We are also pleased that a number of years ago the General Assembly came up with the consensus-based “non-objection basis” practice to ensure the participation of NGOs that do not have consultative status with the Economic and Social Council while respecting the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and the intergovernmental nature of its work. The practice has worked successfully for many years. However, we regret that this decade-long consensus has been broken since February. The established rules of procedure and methods of work of the United Nations have been challenged, provoking unnecessary division and undermining Member States' unity and solidarity. Belarus, China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have therefore proposed an oral amendment deleting the controversial and non-consensus language in operative paragraph 10.

We call on all Member States to vote in favour of our oral amendment and in favour of unity, solidarity and consensus. We call on all Member States to vote in favour of the established rules of procedure of the General Assembly and the intergovernmental nature of its work. We call on all Member States to vote in favour of established practice in United Nations negotiations and to avoid unnecessary division.

**The Acting President:** I give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom on a point of order.

**Mr. Roscoe (United Kingdom):** I think the oral amendment to draft resolution A/75/L.120 proposed by China on behalf of a group of States reveals their true intentions, both through the draft resolution's operative paragraph 11, which was just rejected, and with respect to civil society more broadly. But first I want to tackle a couple of erroneous statements just made.

The first is that the language in operative paragraph 10 is somehow controversial and a break with previous practice. That is not the case. The language in operative

paragraph 10 is a return to the practice of the General Assembly and the long-established practice of the Assembly prior to 2012, when this language was first amended. And it was amended in 2012 to try to restrict the access of civil-society organizations. Consequently, there is no way in which operative paragraph 10, as it currently stands in the draft resolution, is controversial.

The second suggestion was that the language of operative paragraph 10 as it stands does not have consensus support. It is absolutely true that some States have challenged this language in the last four modalities resolutions and that we have voted on the language. However, in previous votes, more than 90 members of the General Assembly have voted in favour of this language, and a few more than 30 have voted against it. It is therefore clear where the majority of support in the General Assembly resides. Therefore the suggestion that we are creating unnecessary division in the General Assembly is of course nonsense. We are simply proposing a paragraph that has the majority support of the General Assembly.

But my biggest concern is about what is behind the draft amendment from the Chinese delegation and others. What they are trying to delete is the last part of operative paragraph 10, the part that reads “and to bring the list to the attention of the Assembly for a final decision by the Assembly on participation”. That final sentence guarantees the General Assembly’s oversight and democratic decision-making with respect to the participation of civil-society groups. The reason that China and the States supporting it want to delete that line is because they want a veto over civil-society groups. There are people they do not want to hear from, and they want to be able to decide unilaterally to exclude them. So I am asking Member States to vote against China’s oral amendment and in favour of access for civil-society groups, of a paragraph that we in the General Assembly have confirmed our support for on four occasions now and of a meeting that enjoys the full participation of civil society in a way that helps inform our discussions on a critical issue.

**The Acting President:** The representative of the United States has asked to make a statement. Is this a statement in explanation of vote? If so, would you please wait until after all decisions are taken to make your statement? Is this an explanation of vote after the voting?

**Mr. Mack** (United States of America): This is an explanation of vote before the voting on the newly introduced draft oral amendment.

**The Acting President:** It seems that there is no rule for that. I respectfully ask that you wait until after.

**Mr. Mack** (United States of America): A draft amendment was just orally introduced, and so all delegations should be able to take a position on the amendment before it is acted upon.

**The Acting President:** It seems that the Secretariat has a different view. Would the representative of the Secretariat please explain to the representative of the United States why he cannot speak now?

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): The General Assembly plenary has two windows for explanations of vote, one before the voting and one after the voting. When there are multiple proposals, regardless of the timing of those proposals, there is one window for explanations of vote before the voting on any of the proposals and a second window after action on all proposals.

**The Acting President:** Is that acceptable to the representative of the United States? You can make your statement after the voting.

**Mr. Mack** (United States of America): Yes, in such a case, the United States would like to make a statement in explanation of vote before the voting instead of after the voting.

**The Acting President:** I apologize but according to the rules of procedure, you cannot speak now. You must wait to speak after.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the oral amendment to draft resolution A/75/L.120 proposed by China.

I give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom on a point of order.

**Mr. Roscoe** (United Kingdom): I would like to ask the representative of the Secretariat to explain on what basis he allowed me to speak.

**The Acting President:** I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): The representative of the United Kingdom spoke on a point of order to request



a recorded vote on the oral amendment proposed by the delegation of China.

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now proceed to take a decision on the oral amendment. A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Belarus, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam

*Against:*

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay

*Abstaining:*

Algeria, Angola, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brunei Darussalam, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Iraq, Kuwait, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritania, Nepal, Oman, Philippines, Rwanda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Singapore, Sudan, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

*The oral amendment to draft resolution A/75/L.120 was rejected by 82 votes to 23, with 28 abstentions.*

**The Acting President:** Since the oral amendment proposed by the representative of China was not adopted, we shall proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.120, as previously amended.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.120, as amended, entitled "Scope, modalities, format and organization of the high-level meeting on universal health coverage". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/75/L.120, as amended?

*Draft resolution A/75/L.120, as amended, was adopted (resolution 75/315).*

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

**Mr. Mack** (United States of America): The United States engaged constructively in the negotiations for this modalities resolution (resolution 75/315), and we look forward to the 2023 high-level meeting on universal health coverage. The coronavirus disease pandemic has reinforced the critical importance of a solid global architecture for pandemic preparedness, complementing strong existing health systems, including ensuring that each country can progress towards achieving its own path to universal health coverage and sustainable health-care financing systems. In order to achieve universal health coverage, we must ensure that all stakeholders, including civil society, are included in the high-level meeting, given their critical role on the ground.

Civil-society organizations continue to serve as the collective eyes and ears on the ground, providing critical information and perspectives on achieving universal health coverage. Their perspectives add great value to our efforts because they work across countries, regions and issues, and they push each of us to do better as Governments. The voices disagreeing with Governments are as important, if not more important, in shedding light on problems. With and through the meaningful involvement of a diverse and independent civil society, key populations are served and individual human rights upheld. Without civil-society voices at the table, advancements in the global efforts to achieve

universal health coverage will be less effective and ultimately incomplete.

We are pleased that operative paragraph 10 remains in resolution 75/315 in its entirety. Operative paragraph 10, which also appears in five recent consensus modalities resolutions, recognizes the importance of an inclusive dialogue when we address important issues here at the United Nations. In the event of objections to the participation of a non-governmental organization (NGO), it is important to ensure that it is the General Assembly that decides on such participation rather than a single Member State or small group. That increases transparency and accountability. Such decisions should not be determined behind closed doors or by the objections of one or a few Member States. The General Assembly, meaning all of us, not just one or two, must consider the criteria set forth by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations in determining eligibility for participating in a meeting and push back against attempts to politicize the work of civil society. When the non-objection basis was introduced in the General Assembly in 2012, it was in the hopes that it would be used properly. However, it has been abused, which is why we have seen the change in the past five modality resolution adoptions.

We are pleased to see operative paragraph 11 deleted from today's text. That language was introduced very late in the negotiation process, with little transparency, and has not appeared in any prior modalities resolutions. United Nations agencies are already involved in crafting the list of civil-society organizations that will participate in high-level meetings, and this paragraph is not needed to affirm that existing role. Furthermore, the paragraph potentially changed existing good practices on selecting civil-society participants in United Nations high-level meetings. We have a lot more work to do collectively to increase civil-society participation across the United Nations, and we will continue those efforts for future modalities and meetings.

**Mrs. Xu Daizhu (China)** (*spoke in Chinese*): It is regrettable that the General Assembly has once again adopted a resolution (resolution 75/315) on modalities for a General Assembly high-level meeting without consensus and that existing rules and institutional arrangements for the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in high-level meetings of the General Assembly have once again been ignored. The Assembly's established practice with respect to consideration on a non-objection basis, formed over

the years, was once again undermined, damaging the consensus and weakening the unity of Member States. For those reasons, China dissociates itself from the consensus on operative paragraph 10.

China has always supported NGOs in participating in United Nations activities, in an orderly manner and in compliance with regulations, so that they can contribute actively to the work of the Organization. The United Nations is an intergovernmental organization of sovereign States. The non-objection basis has been an established practice of the General Assembly over the years that not only facilitates NGO participation in United Nations meetings but also helps maintain the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations. The claim by a small number of countries that such practices will prevent NGOs from participating in the work of the United Nations is a misinterpretation and intentional distortion of such practices.

China calls on Member States to continue extensive and in-depth discussions and do their utmost to seek consensus and unity. China stands ready to continue open and constructive consultations with all parties on this matter to ensure NGOs' active participation in the work of the United Nations on a basis that maintains the rules and practices of the General Assembly.

**Ms. Ali (Syrian Arab Republic)** (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation thanks the Permanent Representatives of Guyana and Japan for their efforts as co-facilitators of resolution 75/315, entitled "Scope, modalities, format and organization of the high-level meeting on universal health coverage".

We believe that health is a prerequisite for sustainable development in its three pillars, as well as one of its results and one of its indicators. For that reason, the holding of a high-level meeting on universal health coverage is part of the efforts to ensure that no one is left behind and to build a healthier world for everyone. It will also accelerate our efforts to achieve universal health coverage by 2030, ensure that people have healthy lives and promote the well-being of all at every stage of life.

My country's delegation participated positively, with transparency and in good faith in the negotiation process on today's resolution. At every step of the way we stressed the importance of adopting it by consensus, because we believe in the importance of respecting the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, especially when it comes to the participation of non-governmental

organizations (NGOs) in its meetings. Unfortunately, however, new, controversial language that had to be voted on was once again introduced regarding the non-objection basis, which has proved successful for the past 10 years. Regrettably, our concerns and those of a significant number of other delegations went unheeded. We reiterate that our concerns are not about objecting to the participation of NGOs in the meetings of the General Assembly, as the Permanent Representatives of the United Kingdom and the United States have said. Given the intergovernmental nature of our Organization, we believe that the participation of NGOs that do not have consultative status with the Economic and Social Council must be governed by the applicable rules of procedure of the United Nations. The opinion of one or two countries is enough and must be taken into account when a decision is made by this Organization.

Needless to say, the long-term practice for negotiations at the United Nations is that when there is no consensus among Member States, the best solution is to go back to previously agreed language, and that did not happen during the negotiation process or today, undermining the solidarity which must prevail in our work. For that reason, my delegation dissociates itself from the consensus on operative paragraph 10 as it stands, especially regarding the non-objection basis.

**Mrs. Mozgovaya** (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Belarus supported the adoption of resolution 75/315. We consider the holding of the high-level meeting on universal health coverage an important element in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We note the efforts made by the co-facilitators within the process to reach a consensus document and take everyone's positions into account. We are concerned about the fact that some delegations expressed diametrically opposite views on the same issues, and we consider that an inconsistent and selective approach. Here in the General Assembly Hall we often talk about the transparency and effectiveness of cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). We are therefore surprised by the negative attitude of some delegations to the importance of NGOs' responsibility regarding the requirements for their participation in the high-level meeting.

Guided by the interests of Member States in their cooperation with NGOs, Belarus fully supports the

procedures proposed in operative paragraph 11 of the draft resolution. The approach in operative paragraph 11 merely describes what takes place in practice, and we therefore joined the countries that requested that draft amendment A/75/L.124 be put to a vote and that voted against it.

We decisively supported the oral amendment to paragraph 10 removing the current wording, which is constantly being put to the vote and concerns the General Assembly's final decision on participation in the high-level meeting. We are therefore concerned about the continued attempts to promote non-consensus provisions that run counter to established practice when it comes to the participation of NGOs, which have become systemic and do not conform to the principle of multilateralism. We are fully in favour of maintaining the existing practices regarding the participation of those NGOs that do not have consultative status with Economic and Social Council and the right of States to determine which NGOs participate in intergovernmental processes. We therefore continue to state consistently that we dissociate ourselves from operative paragraph 10 as it stands.

**Mrs. Iileka** (Namibia): My delegation would like to briefly explain its vote regarding the draft amendment A/75/L.124, presented earlier by the United Kingdom. My delegation abstained in the voting, but not because we do not see civil-society participation as necessary and critical. The Namibian Government has consistently supported the participation of civil society in the work of the General Assembly and the United Nations as a whole. The participation of civil-society organizations has always been an important pillar of the work of the United Nations, with such organizations often on the front lines of initiatives and doing the work on the ground. But we were concerned about the language in operative paragraph 11, which was ambiguous, lacked clarity and set out a role for the Secretariat that was new and required further consideration. However, we also saw the text presented by the co-facilitators as a genuine attempt to bridge the gaps between the various positions, and we thank them for their valiant effort.

As the world starts to rebuild from the coronavirus disease pandemic in what we hope will be an equitable and transformative way, it is imperative to ensure that the Assembly can speak with one voice on critical matters such as this. We believe we must all now strive to show flexibility and compromise, the principles that form the bedrock of this Organization.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Mrs. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett and Mr. Kimihiro Ishikane, the Permanent Representatives of Guyana and Japan, respectively, who ably and patiently conducted the discussions and complex negotiations on resolution 75/315 in informal consultations. I am sure the members of the Assembly join me in expressing our appreciation to them.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 131.

#### **Agenda item 136 (continued)**

#### **Impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets**

##### **Draft resolution (A/75/L.123)**

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico to introduce draft resolution A/75/L.123.

**Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/75/L.123, entitled “Impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets”, for the consideration of the General Assembly. This draft resolution, which Mexico has the honour to introduce for the third time, addresses a series of pressing needs in the digital context. As of today, 57 per cent of the world’s population lacks access to the Internet. Faced with the confinement caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, that means that more than half the world has been disconnected and left behind. Some have been able to adapt the way they conduct their businesses, studies and lives, but most have faced digital exclusion at a time when connectivity is vital to recovery.

Rapid technological change refers not just to science, technology and innovation but also to human and institutional capacity to adapt to such change. Along with vaccines, global connectivity is another sine qua non of human development in the twenty-first century and deserves our full attention. As we have seen from the exponential growth of recent years, technologies can help us meet the Sustainable Development Goals. The management of technology, however, also involves

challenges that must be addressed in international cooperative projects. The text of the draft that we are introducing today takes into account the main multilateral advances made in this area during the past two years and identifies ways to close digital gaps and increase Internet access, calling on Member States and other stakeholders to ensure universal and affordable access to the Internet by 2030.

Building capacity and infrastructure is essential and urgent. That is why the draft resolution calls for investment in the digital skills of our populations, especially those in vulnerable situations. It highlights the contributions of rapid technological change in important areas for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That means health, energy, agriculture and food security, governance, education, economy, finance, employment, well-being and gender equality. In other words, we believe that rapid technological change should have a positive and incremental impact that supports the inclusion of all people, online and offline. Against a backdrop of recovery from the pandemic caused by COVID-19, we are at a key point for strengthening international digital cooperation. Although we have already affirmed that the 2030 Agenda is a road map for sustainable recovery, it is now up to us to join forces to accelerate its implementation. None of that will be possible without the full digital inclusion to which we all aspire.

The Secretary-General’s road map for digital cooperation (A/74/821) contains a number of important recommendations for adapting to rapid technological change. In this text Member States have had an opportunity to discuss some of the recommendations, and we have proposed some specific actions in support of improved digital cooperation. Mexico believes that the United Nations should play a prominent role in this area. For that reason, we consider the work of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism and the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Technology to be vital.

Mexico thanks all the delegations that participated actively in the open, transparent and inclusive consultations. Together we have achieved a comprehensive draft resolution that — beyond taking into account the institutional advances of the past two years — reflects the priorities of the international community in the face of the socioeconomic effects of the pandemic. We reiterate our appreciation to all



Member States that contributed ideas and language to the text. We believe firmly that multilateralism represents the best way to move forward and close digital gaps. The text to be adopted represents our collective will to harness rapid technological change for all and for sustainable development, human rights, governance and inclusion.

**The Acting President:** The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/75/L.123, entitled “Impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to the delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/75/L.123: Angola, Armenia, Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Botswana, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Indonesia, Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, Nepal, Pakistan, Palau, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Rwanda, Singapore, Tunisia, Turkey and Ukraine.

**The Acting President:** May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/75/L.123?

*Draft resolution A/75/L.123 was adopted (resolution 75/316).*

**The Acting President:** Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of position after adoption, I would like to remind members that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Ms. Rose** (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom is committed to harnessing the power of rapid technological change for sustainable and inclusive development, and we welcome Mexico’s efforts to bring the issue to the General Assembly. We would like to express our appreciation for the fact that the negotiations on resolution 75/316 produced a more focused text. We are happy to join the consensus on the resolution but would like to take this opportunity to share our views on some aspects of the text.

We believe that the resolution’s value is in its focus on the impact of rapid technological change on achieving

the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We do not think there is value in duplicating language in existing initiatives, which is why we called for a streamlined approach and questioned the need to repeat language from other resolutions. We will continue to advocate for this approach in future iterations of the resolution.

The United Kingdom underscores the value and principles of multi-stakeholder cooperation. We firmly believe that we must do more to harness the strengths of Governments, international organizations, the private sector, civil society and the technical and academic communities. We must work to include all stakeholders in these efforts if rapid technological change is to contribute to achieving the SDGs.

We also fully support language recognizing the importance of closing the gender digital divides and reaffirming the role of digital technologies in enabling women and girls to fully participate in political, economic, social and cultural life and to exercise their human rights. Human rights should be protected online as they are offline. We strongly supported language emphasizing that adaptation to rapid technological change should be considered with respect to the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The United Kingdom recognizes the importance of State obligations to uphold international human rights law and to make national policies compliant. As well as language on the relevance of the right to privacy, as set out in article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, we would also have liked to see greater recognition of all other rights, including freedom of opinion and expression and of peaceful assembly and association, among others.

We underline our commitment to ensuring the rights of children, online and offline. Our understanding of operative paragraph 4 of the resolution is that efforts to protect children online must fully comply with international human rights law.

We thank Mexico again for its commitment throughout the negotiations and for advocating for this important topic. The United Kingdom looks forward to continuing to engage constructively on the issue.

**Mr. Leiby** (United States of America): The United States is pleased to join the consensus on resolution 75/316 and appreciates Mexico’s efforts to facilitate it. We would like to share our views as they pertain to it.

The United States dissociates itself from the resolution's preambular paragraph 13 to the extent that the paragraph promotes technology transfer and the distribution of intellectual property rights that are not both voluntary and on mutually agreed terms. We believe firmly that the strong protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights provide some of the critical incentives needed to drive the innovation that can address the health, environmental and development challenges of today and tomorrow. The United States understands with respect to this declaration in general, and preambular paragraph 13 in particular, that references to the dissemination of technology and the transfer of or access to technology are to voluntary technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, and that all references to access to information and knowledge are to information or knowledge that is made available with the authorization of the legitimate holder. The United States underscores the importance of regulatory and legal environments that support innovation. From the perspective of the United States, the language in preambular paragraph 13 concerning

technology transfer does not serve as a precedent for future negotiated documents.

The United States understands the reference to the right to privacy in operative paragraph 4 of the resolution to refer to the right not to be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with one's privacy, as set forth in article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In operative paragraph 8, the United States does not consider the list of specific platforms, technologies and goals comprehensive, nor do we believe it accurately describes the priorities of the international community as highlighted elsewhere in the resolution.

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

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 136?

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 11:35 a.m.*