



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

Provisional

9228th meeting

Tuesday, 20 December 2022, 3.30 p.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Raguttahalli	(India)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil	Mr. Costa Filho
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
	Gabon	Ms. Koumby Missambo
	Ghana	Mrs. Hackman
	Ireland	Mr. Gallagher
	Kenya	Mrs. Toroitich
	Mexico	Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

Letter dated 13 September 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/688)

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 13 September 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/688)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas, Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, to participate in this meeting.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Jenča.

Mr. Jenča: I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and for providing me this opportunity to brief the Security Council on recent developments in the South Caucasus, specifically on the situation between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Since my previous briefing (see S/PV.9132), on 15 September, the situation has remained fragile, with the sides regularly trading accusations of ceasefire violations. Nevertheless, despite the sporadic incidents, a glimmer of hope for progress in the ongoing diplomatic efforts has appeared following the renewed violence on mid-September. We have indeed witnessed several high-level diplomatic initiatives in recent months.

In early October, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan met in Prague on the margins of the first European Political Community meeting, at the invitation of the President of the French Republic and the President of the European Council. The meeting resulted in an agreement to deploy the European Union (EU) monitoring capacity in Armenia, whose mandate ended yesterday. In that regard, we note reports that a possible longer-term EU mission in Armenia is being

envisaged, with the ultimate goal of contributing to sustainable peace in the region.

In late October, the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders met again in Sochi, hosted by the President of the Russian Federation, where they agreed, inter alia, to refrain from the use of force or threatening force.

In addition to leader-level talks, several meetings at the level of Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister took place in recent months. For instance, the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers met in New York in September under the auspices of the United States Secretary of State.

In various forums, the sides have also been discussing elements for a possible negotiated settlement, including the critical issues of border delimitation and demarcation within the framework of mutual recognition of their territorial integrity and sovereignty.

We commend all those ongoing engagements and mediation efforts and encourage their close coordination to ensure maximum effectiveness.

In addition to the mission by the European Union agreed by both sides, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as the Collective Security Treaty Organization, at the request of Armenia, also deployed technical missions to Armenia.

For his part, during his bilateral meetings with Prime Minister Pashinyan of Armenia and Foreign Minister Bayramov of Azerbaijan on the margins of the General Assembly's high-level week at its seventy-seventh session, the Secretary-General urged progress towards a peaceful settlement. He repeated his message during last week's meeting with Armenian Foreign Minister Mirzoyan. The United Nations will continue to remain in close contact with all relevant actors and the parties concerned and stands ready to support the ongoing peace efforts as needed. At the invitation of the host Governments, the United Nations country teams in Armenia and Azerbaijan also continue to undertake various inter-agency needs and programmatic assessments, including to accessible conflict-impacted areas, as needed.

Regrettably, despite those promising diplomatic engagements, the tensions both on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border and around areas under the control of the Russian peacekeeping forces have not abated as hoped, with various incidents being reported. On 12 December, in the latest sign of escalating tensions,

reports emerged of protests near a Russian peacekeeping post on the Lachin road, which is a vital artery for the people living in the area. It has been reported that the protests were against what they claim is the illegal exploitation of mineral resources and its environmental impact on the surrounding area. The United Nations, which is present neither in the Lachin corridor nor in the areas under the mandate of the Russian peacekeepers, is not in a position to verify or confirm the various claims and allegations. We understand that as we are meeting, the protests are continuing.

In the past few days both Armenia and Azerbaijan have written to the Secretary-General and to the Security Council regarding the recent events, each alleging violations of agreed commitments by the other side and challenging each other's claims. Their accounts of the developments and the situation differ widely. Each side has accused the other of violating the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020 signed by the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation. Media reports and statements from the Russian peacekeepers in the area have indicated that some humanitarian and medical goods and supplies have been able to get through. It is imperative that the population, particularly those in need, be allowed to travel freely and have access to basic services. In that regard, we welcome the Russian peacekeeping forces' commitment to facilitating and ensuring safe passage through the corridor.

On 14 December, the Secretary-General noted that he was following the ongoing developments around the Lachin corridor with concern. He urged both sides to de-escalate tensions and to ensure freedom and security of movement along the corridor, in line with the previously reached agreements. He also reiterated his support to the ongoing mediation efforts in the region. The United Nations country teams in both Armenia and Azerbaijan continue to maintain open channels with the authorities and stand prepared to respond to emerging humanitarian needs, if requested and as conditions allow.

As we have seen time and time again, and most recently in September, the potential human toll of a resumption of the conflict could be considerable. Any renewed conflict would not only impact the people of Armenia and Azerbaijan but also likely those in the wider South Caucasus region and beyond. The international community must not let that happen. The parties must abide by their obligation to fully implement

the trilateral statement on the ceasefire of 9 November 2020 and the subsequent agreed statements and commitments, as well as to redouble their diplomatic efforts to achieve a negotiated, lasting and peaceful settlement before it is too late.

The President: I thank Mr. Jenča for his briefing.

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

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Jenča for his briefing. The events that have taken place over the past few days are very worrying. In that regard, I would like to stress two points.

First, it is unacceptable that the flow of traffic though the road corridor connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia has been blocked since 12 December. The blocking of the Lachin corridor has resulted directly in the isolation of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh and has had humanitarian consequences that are getting worse by the day. France calls for the unconditional reopening of the Lachin corridor to traffic and for the delivery of supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh, while also ensuring respect for the rights of the people living there.

France calls for the implementation of the commitments made in the framework of the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020. We also note that as Azerbaijan has undertaken to ensure, the safe movement of people, vehicles and goods along the Lachin corridor in both directions must be guaranteed. We also call for immediate, free and unhindered access for humanitarian organizations and United Nations agencies, in particular the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to the populations concerned, including through the Lachin corridor. We note that the first convoys of International Committee of the Red Cross have successfully passed through the corridor.

Secondly, France calls on Armenia and Azerbaijan to foster an environment that is conducive both to the successful conclusion of the ongoing negotiations and to achieving progress, exclusively through dialogue and without any use of force, in order to settle every outstanding issue, including that of rights and guarantees for the population of Nagorno-Karabakh.

France, together with the European Union, will continue to contribute to efforts to promote dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We support

the efforts to make progress on all the subjects under negotiation, including the draft peace treaty, delimitation of the border, humanitarian issues and the opening of communication channels, in order to achieve a lasting peace in the region. As has been mentioned in the Security Council today, the meeting in Prague on 6 October between the President of France, the President of the European Council, the President of Azerbaijan and the Prime Minister of Armenia brought significant progress. France stands ready to support the parties in contributing to those objectives, in concert with all partners and stakeholders. We have released a draft press statement that is open for comments until 10 a.m. tomorrow, and I thank everyone in advance for their input.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing.

Like other members of the Security Council, the United Arab Emirates is concerned about the recent increase in tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We continue to stress the importance of de-escalation and restraint. All sides should refrain from exacerbating the situation through escalatory action or rhetoric, not least in view of the potential humanitarian consequences. It is important to ease the situation of civilians and to refrain from making their lives more precarious.

We echo the Secretary-General's 14 December statement on ensuring freedom and security of movement along the Lachin corridor, in line with the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020 by Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation. These latest developments reinforce the need to find a comprehensive and sustainable settlement that builds on the progress that has already been made. In that regard, we underline the importance of the trilateral statements, including those of 11 January 2021, 26 November 2021 and 31 October 2022. The United Arab Emirates reiterates its principled position that there can be no lasting military solution to conflicts. We continue to urge the parties to resolve their differences through peaceful and diplomatic means, in line with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. We encourage the two parties to engage constructively and in good faith with mediation efforts in order to achieve long-term peace in the region.

At a time of regional and geopolitical uncertainty, we, the members of the Council and the international community, must do our utmost to bolster stability,

dialogue and peaceful coexistence. The United Arab Emirates will continue to support all efforts to that end.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing.

We have taken note of the letters from Armenia to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/688) and from Azerbaijan to the Secretary-General (S/2022/885). Although with contrasting perspectives, the information provided helps us understand the developments on the ground, their dynamics and the impact on the populations. Despite the different views on certain matters, we appreciate the fact that both sides are committed to the dialogue and a peaceful resolution of all issues.

We recognize the importance of ensuring the freedom and security of movement along the corridor, in line with the previous agreements reached between the two countries. These agreements should be respected and implemented by both sides. The free movement of goods and people in the Lachin corridor is of great importance to the populations living in and around the area. As agreed by both sides, the Russian peacekeeping contingent currently deployed in the area is in charge of the organization of the movement of people, goods and vehicles around the road.

As to concerns about the exploitation of the natural resources, we call on both sides to fully engage in talks in order to find mutually agreed solutions. Dialogue is the best way to deal with every issue. In this context, we recall the meeting of the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders at the margins of the European Political Community summit in Prague in early October, where it was agreed to send a mission of European observers to the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. Other important meetings have happened, as we heard from Assistant Secretary-General Jenča. It is the right course to take, and we welcome such developments.

It is of particular importance to point out that both sides have expressed their commitment to signing a peace treaty as soon as possible. We could not highlight more the importance of that not only for the stability of the border area but for the overall peaceful resolution of all pending issues. There is no alternative to a peaceful negotiated solution through the path of diplomacy, which we hope will lead to a peace treaty. The sooner Armenia and Azerbaijan will move to this direction, the better it will be for the people of those two countries and the region.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing.

China has taken note of the recent letters from Armenia to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/688) and from Azerbaijan to the Secretary-General (S/2022/885) on the situation in Lachin corridor and expresses concern over the current situation and its humanitarian impact. We believe the relevant disputes surrounding the Lachin corridor should be resolved through dialogue and consultations. Russia has done a lot of work to this end with positive progress, which China welcomes. We hope that, with the good offices of Russia and other parties concerned, the disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Lachin corridor will be resolved as soon as possible.

Armenia and Azerbaijan are close neighbours, and achieving shared security and development through cooperation is in the fundamental interests of both countries. In recent years, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia have issued four trilateral statements, making arrangements on the cessation of hostilities, economic and transportation cooperation and border issues, respectively, demonstrating the political will of the two countries to resolve disputes through political and diplomatic means.

We encourage Armenia and Azerbaijan, on the basis of those four trilateral statements and with the good offices of Russia and other parties concerned, to meet each other half way and properly resolve disputes between the two countries based on universally recognized international law and norms governing international relations. China supports any diplomatic effort that contributes to this goal and will also play a constructive role to this end.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing today.

The United States is deeply concerned by the ongoing impediments to use of the Lachin corridor and the growing humanitarian implications of the situation. Let me be clear: impediments to the use of the Lachin corridor set the peace process back, undermine international confidence in this process and carry potential severe humanitarian implications.

We call on the Government of Azerbaijan and others responsible for the corridor's security to restore free movement, including for humanitarian and

commercial use, as soon as possible. We are encouraged by the restoration of gas supplies to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. Any attempt to cut off services essential to the civilian population of Nagorno-Karabakh is unacceptable. The United States will continue to call on all sides to exercise restraint, immediately cease activities that undermine the peace process and observe their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Outstanding grievances between Armenia and Azerbaijan must be solved through peaceful negotiations. Negotiations are the only way to achieve lasting peace. The international community must do its part and remain engaged in efforts to diplomatically broker a lasting peace.

As time has shown, there can be no one sided or military solution to this conflict. Both parties must recommit to the diplomatic process and re-establish direct lines of communication across diplomatic channels. All parties must intensify their diplomatic engagement and make progress towards normalizing their relations through a comprehensive and sustainable peace agreement.

There must be a negotiated comprehensive settlement of all remaining issues. The United States remains dedicated to a sustainable ceasefire and a peaceful resolution to this conflict. We remain actively engaged bilaterally, multilaterally and with partners as we work toward that shared goal. We remain ready to facilitate dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan bilaterally, trilaterally and in coordination with such partners as the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, so as to achieve a long-term political settlement to the conflict in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Charter and the Helsinki Final Act.

I want to close by once again reaffirming the importance of a negotiated comprehensive settlement of all remaining issues between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča for his briefing. We also note the participation in our meeting today of the Permanent Representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

We are concerned by the information we have received about the blocking of Lachin corridor, which has resulted from disagreements on the development of the ore deposits in the region. The Lachin corridor

ensures a link between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. According to the statement made by the leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia on 9 November 2020, the Lachin corridor is under the control of the Russian peacekeeping contingent, which remains a guarantor of stability in the region and is carrying out its objectives effectively.

It is important to note that when the 9 November 2020 statement was signed, the sides undertook commitments that need to be strictly abided by, inter alia, to ensure that there are no issues or difficulties for the lives of civilians. We expect the full transport connection to be restored in the very near future. Over the course of recent days, the Russian side, through its Ministry of Defence, its peacekeeping-contingent command in the area and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, has been undertaking all necessary efforts to resolve the situation in the Lachin corridor as soon as possible.

We have organized regular contacts with our Azerbaijan and Armenian partners, as a result of which we have managed to obtain the resumption of the supply of gas to Nagorno-Karabakh and the partial reopening of the Lachin corridor to traffic. Parameters for the visit of Azerbaijani environmental experts to the ore deposits in Nagorno-Karabakh are being agreed upon.

We expect that all of the agreements arrived at with Russian mediation on the ceasefire and the non-use of force will be implemented. We call upon Azerbaijan and Armenia to exercise restraint, refrain from the kinds of steps that could increase tensions and abide by agreements reached in the trilateral statements made by the leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia on 9 November 2020, 11 January and 26 November 2021, and 31 October 2022.

We are convinced that the complete and full implementation of the provisions of these statements is the most sustainable way to normalize relations between Baku and Yerevan. All four documents are comprehensive in nature and inextricably linked. Their provisions stem from each other, and their implementation will ensure that we have the conditions for sustainable peace in the South Caucasus, which is in the interest of not just the countries in the region, but all of their neighbours as well.

We intend to continue extending all necessary assistance to Baku and Yerevan to make sure that the agreements are implemented in formats and scope that are acceptable to both sides.

The trilateral working group on unblocking economic and transport links in the region continues its work, co-chaired by the Deputy Prime Ministers of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. The group's most recent meeting was held on 6 December.

In addition, together with the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides, we continue to work on the preparation of a peace treaty. It is our view that all disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan should be resolved exclusively through political and diplomatic means and, when it comes to border issues, within the framework of the work of the bilateral Commission on the delimitation of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, with the advisory assistance of Russia.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his very helpful update.

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned about the recent closure of the Lachin corridor. We are pleased that the gas supply to the region has been reinstated, but we continue to call for the immediate reopening of the corridor. The Lachin corridor is the only means by which daily necessities can be delivered to the region. The closure of the corridor for over a week raises the potential for severe humanitarian consequences — especially in the winter. We also note with concern the civilians who have been stranded by the closure and urge that their unimpeded return be prioritized.

We are in touch with the Governments of both Armenia and Azerbaijan. It is only through diplomacy, in line with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, that lasting peace can be achieved. The United Kingdom continues to support the internationally led negotiation efforts that seek to secure stability and peace in the region.

Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča for his briefing.

Brazil received with concern the reports of restrictions on freedom of movement in the Lachin corridor. The right of passage on the road is one of the pillars of the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020. Any obstructions, regardless of the pretext, jeopardize the well-being of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh and threaten the reconciliation process between Armenia and Azerbaijan, in a conflict that has already cost thousands of human lives.

Fortunately, the tensions of the past few days have not translated into episodes of violence. We encourage the parties to show similar restraint in their rhetoric, so that the harshness of their words is not interpreted as incitement to renewed hostilities. It is essential to keep channels of dialogue open and adopt confidence-building measures in order to objectively clarify the facts and find pragmatic solutions.

We take note of the mediation efforts of the Russian Federation, which have contributed to the resumption of the gas supply to the region. We encourage other members to act in an equally constructive way in order to prevent the crisis from escalating and to avert the dangers of a worsening humanitarian situation.

The 9 November 2020 declaration offers an initial road map for peacebuilding. It is essential that the parties refrain from actions that could characterize violations of its terms in order to ensure the conditions for the commission established to demarcate the bilateral border to carry out its mandate successfully.

Mrs. Toroitich (Kenya): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča for his briefing.

Kenya is deeply concerned about reports of ongoing blockades along the Lachin corridor, which, we understand, is critical for humanitarian access to the Nagorno-Karabakh region. We call on both sides to de-escalate the current tensions and cooperate in ensuring freedom and security of movement along the corridor, in line with the previously reached agreements.

We underscore the need for the parties to exercise maximum restraint and refrain from any action that could escalate the situation. In particular, they should refrain from engaging in misinformation and disinformation, including through social media, as it could spark panic among the people and undermine efforts to contain the situation and restore calm and understanding.

There cannot be a military solution to any conflict, including this one. But the deployment of tools available in the Charter of the United Nations for the pacific settlement of disputes, including consultations and negotiations, offer the best chances for a sustainable outcome.

We therefore encourage the stakeholders to continue to work with the two sides in order to find a comprehensive and sustainable settlement to the conflict and to achieve the normalization of relations based on mutual recognition and respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity within their borders.

Let me reiterate that dialogue should be pursued as the primary and most viable option in resolving conflicts. The two countries need to engage in it in good faith. With political will and determination, such engagement will, in time, yield tangible results that will be of benefit to both countries and their peoples.

Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I echo the previous speakers in thanking Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for the information he has shared with the Council and welcome the representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan to the Council.

Mexico has been following with concern the heightened tensions surrounding the situation in the Lachin corridor. The possible humanitarian implications that could arise in winter conditions if transit blockages of vehicles and people continue are alarming. We call for free movement along the corridor, in line with the provisions of the 9 November 2020 agreement, and for respect for international law, in particular international humanitarian law.

Furthermore, Mexico reiterates its call on the parties to respect and fully implement all the provisions of the aforementioned agreement and to resolve their differences through dialogue with a view to concluding a peace agreement, which would significantly contribute to regional stability. We call on international actors with the capacity to engage in dialogue with the parties to urge them to resolve their differences through diplomatic channels.

Above all, we call on the parties to avoid any action that could raise tensions or trigger escalation. The human cost in past crises has been extremely high, and any situation that could put the civilian population at risk must be avoided.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing.

We regret the fact that tensions have been on the rise in recent weeks. Norway is particularly concerned about developments in the Lachin corridor and the potential for further destabilization in the region. The blockage of the corridor has already had severe humanitarian implications. Medical supplies and medical evacuations have been interrupted. Any disruption to the supply of essential goods and services harms the most vulnerable groups first. That can and must be avoided.

We call on all parties to adhere to the agreements expressed in the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020. In particular, we call on Azerbaijan to guarantee safe movement along the Lachin corridor. It is in no one's interest to trigger an avoidable humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. Solutions should be sought through dialogue and diplomatic initiatives. We urge the parties to show maximum restraint, take steps to de-escalate the situation and return to the negotiating table in good faith and without preconditions.

We welcome the fact that the Security Council is taking up the issue today. The international community cannot just weather the storm in the hope that it will go away. We reiterate our support for the ongoing mediation efforts in the region and welcome the efforts of the international community to help advance negotiations.

Mrs. Hackman (Ghana): I would like to begin by thanking Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča for his briefing on the prevailing security situation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, focusing on the recent developments in the Lachin corridor. I reaffirm Ghana's support for the United Nations efforts to help to find a lasting solution to the long-standing conflict between the two neighbouring countries.

I also welcome the representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan, who are participating in today's meeting under rule 37.

My delegation has taken due note of the concerns expressed by Armenia in its letter dated 18 December, as well as of the corresponding letter by Azerbaijan, dated 19 December, addressed to the Council. We encourage the parties to set aside mutual blame and stay engaged through dialogue as a means to resolve all concerns.

As friends of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Ghana continues to be concerned about the seething tensions that have engulfed the two countries for centuries and have intermittently erupted into armed conflict, resulting in civilian and military casualties, as well as the destruction of infrastructure. The permanency of the ethnic, cultural and historical identities of the people, which, as we know, have largely influenced the conflict, demands of the two sides and the international community to continue to work together to devise ways for the peaceful coexistence of the two peoples within the modern conceptualization of the State, under international law.

In contributing to today's briefing, I wish to make the following four points. First, we reiterate our call for the de-escalation of tensions and strongly urge the two sides to refrain from all unilateral actions and inflammatory rhetoric, which have proved in the past to easily degenerate into armed hostilities. While State authorities endeavour to forge peace through the implementation of existing ceasefire arrangements, the communities must themselves be equally committed to resolving, through dialogue and constructive actions, any emerging disputes in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We urge local leaders and civil society to be supportive of peace efforts by facilitating intercommunal discourse and avoiding divisive action.

Secondly, we reiterate our call on the parties to remain committed to the full implementation of all trilateral statements, which, in our view, constitute important steps towards the complete cessation of hostilities, a progressive resolution of the conflict and the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. All sides must ensure the consistent implementation of their responsibilities, in accordance with the terms of the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020, including the terms of paragraph 6, relating to the Lachin corridor.

It is also important for the process of the delineation and delimitation of borders to be undertaken on the basis of the established norms of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, with particular regard to the principles of mutual recognition of territorial integrity, the non-use of force or threat of force in the acquisition of territory and the pacific settlement of disputes.

Thirdly, we urge international support for the normalization of relations between the two countries. With the European continent already facing much upheaval from the war in Ukraine, as well as other volatile situations, it stands in the interest of international peace and security to ensure the de-escalation of tensions in the South Caucasus. Implementing confidence- and trust-building measures would help to strengthen the fragile peace that currently prevails between the two sides.

The international community must also play a role in facilitating negotiations geared towards the complete resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and a future Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty. We remain supportive of ongoing international mediatory efforts by the Russian peacekeeping force, as well as engagements

by the Council of the European Union, the co-Chairs of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

To fully realize the benefits of those efforts, they must be coherent, coordinated and centred on the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter. We further urge the two sides to remain open and committed to the various mediatory efforts geared towards achieving lasting peace, which has eluded their peoples.

Fourthly, we emphasize the need for both sides to prioritize the humanitarian interests of civilian populations. Both sides must ensure that actions that could inadvertently violate the fundamental human rights of the people, including the right to freedom of movement, are avoided. Any real or perceived blockage to the Lachin corridor must be addressed as a matter of urgency to ensure the uninterrupted and safe movement of all persons and commercial goods.

Finally, allow me to reaffirm Ghana's commitment to the Council's collective aspiration for peace, security and stability between Armenia and Azerbaijan and in the wider Caucasus region.

Mr. Gallagher (Ireland): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing.

Like others, Ireland is seriously concerned about the ongoing obstruction of the Lachin corridor, which began on 12 December, and has severe implications for the local population. Without the free movement of people, goods, food and medical supplies through that vital corridor, the people of Nagorno-Karabakh will surely face a humanitarian crisis this winter. As Council members, we must do everything we can to avoid that and to prevent another man-made catastrophe from emerging on our watch. Ireland therefore calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to immediately and unconditionally restore freedom and security of movement along the Lachin corridor, in line with the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020.

As States parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Armenia and Azerbaijan have an obligation to ensure the right to peaceful assembly. Any legitimate exercise of that right should be respected, while also ensuring that it does not compromise public safety, public health and the rights and freedoms of others.

Now is the time for restraint and de-escalation. It is time to moderate rhetoric and to refrain from threats and provocation. It is time to continue important reconciliation efforts to prevent further unnecessary loss of life. Concerns can and, indeed, should be addressed through dialogue and consultations with the parties involved. We welcome the steps undertaken by the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan to overcome their differences and reach a durable and sustainable peace in the region.

Ireland supports a negotiated, comprehensive and sustainable settlement of the conflict, including on the long-term status of Nagorno-Karabakh. We maintain our full support to the international format of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to pursue that objective. We strongly support the continued, active engagement of the European Union to support the sides in their important work to peacefully resolve remaining issues, including through the Brussels dialogue process.

Together with our European Union partners, Ireland supports the common goal of a South Caucasus where people can live in peace, security and prosperity. I encourage all of us around the table to do the same.

Ms. Koumby Missambo (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for the clarity of his briefing on the situation along the Lachin corridor and the tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

We are concerned about the reports of a blockade of the Lachin corridor since 12 December, which could lead to a humanitarian crisis. The right of passage through the corridor must absolutely be guaranteed. It is vital that we learn from the large-scale clashes in September on the direct border between the two countries, which resulted in many casualties on both sides. We call on the parties to refrain from provocative rhetoric that could fuel antagonism. The parties should adhere to the ceasefire agreement of 10 September 2020.

We take note of the position expressed by the Azerbaijani authorities, who deny any intention to block the Lachin corridor, pointing out the environmental risks arising from the exploitation of natural resources in the area. In any case, an independent investigation must be carried out to establish the facts and enlighten the Security Council on the reality of the situation along that route, which is vital and essential to supplying the population. We reiterate the importance

of continuing negotiations based on the framework set out in the tripartite agreement, with a view to achieving a settlement of the crucial outstanding issues, including the signing of a peace treaty and the delimitation of borders. We call on both parties to de-escalate and do everything possible to calm the situation and improve the daily lives of the populations concerned, especially now, in winter.

In view of the fragile situation on the ground, the international community must mobilize to promote dialogue with a view to finding a solution that will advance the cause of the two countries' peaceful coexistence. We encourage all regional initiatives that favour the building of a lasting peace.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of India.

I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for updating us on latest developments related to the situation at the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. Reports regarding a blockade of the Lachin corridor indicate adverse implications for the supply of essential items such as food and medicine to Nagorno-Karabakh. That is a matter of deep concern and has the potential to morph into a humanitarian crisis. We join the Secretary-General in calling for de-escalating tensions and ensuring freedom and security of movement along the corridor in line with previously reached agreements. We reaffirm our support for the ongoing mediation efforts in the region. It has been our consistent position that such disputes should be settled through diplomacy and dialogue. We encourage both sides to pursue diplomatic paths to arrive at a lasting peaceful solution.

We continue to reiterate that the global order is anchored in international law, the Charter of the United Nations and respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all States.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Armenia.

Mr. Margaryan (Armenia): I would like to express our appreciation to the Indian presidency for convening today's emergency meeting.

The urgency of the matter is due to the evolving humanitarian crisis created by Azerbaijan as a result of its imposition of an illegal blockade on the population of Nagorno-Karabakh in direct breach of its existing

commitments — in particular, the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020 — as well as its international obligations based on the fundamental principles of international human rights and humanitarian law.

Since 12 December, the safe passage of people, food and medicine to the population of Nagorno-Karabakh has essentially been denied as Azerbaijan has initiated a massive campaign of State-sponsored protests along the Lachin corridor, blocking the one and only supply route in and out of Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan's actions constitute a direct violation of paragraph 6 of the trilateral statement, which stipulates that the Lachin corridor shall provide a connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia remaining under the control of Russian Federation peacekeeping forces, and that Azerbaijan shall "guarantee the safety of citizens, vehicles and goods travelling along the Lachin corridor in both directions."

By orchestrating an unlawful blockade of the Lachin corridor on a fabricated pretext of environmental concerns, Azerbaijan has effectively targeted a population of 120,000 people by isolating them in precarious humanitarian conditions during the winter season. The blockade of that critical humanitarian lifeline has resulted in multiple disruptions and adverse experiences. At least 1,100 civilians have been stranded along the blocked highway for the past week, unable to return to their homes. Children have been separated from their families. The provision of health care and social services has been obstructed, causing life-threatening situations and human suffering. The transfer of patients for urgent treatment in Armenian hospitals has become impossible and has already resulted in the death of a critically ill patient. Since 12 December, there has been a single case of transferring one patient in an operation that required cooperation among multiple stakeholders, including peacekeepers and the International Committee of the Red Cross. That clearly indicates that the corridor remains closed to the population, and not otherwise, as the Azerbaijani side has suggested. Shortages of food and other essential goods have already been reported, as 4,000 tons of supplies have still not been delivered to their destination. This medieval siege of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh was exacerbated by the disruption of the gas supply for three consecutive days in severe winter conditions. The lack of heating effectively disrupted the schools, depriving children of their basic right to education.

The alarming situation in Nagorno-Karabakh is close to becoming a humanitarian catastrophe. Despite the efforts of the peacekeeping forces on the ground, the negotiations between the Nagorno-Karabakh authorities and the Azerbaijani side, aimed at restoring the safe and unhindered operation of the corridor, have so far yielded no results. The coordinated nature of Azerbaijan's actions, including earlier incidents targeting the civilian population and critical infrastructure, constitute yet more evidence that the closure of the Lachin corridor is in fact a pre-planned operation being implemented by the Azerbaijani authorities with the intention of inflicting harm on the civilian population and creating a large-scale humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh. The claims made by the Azerbaijani authorities that no restrictions have been placed on the Lachin corridor are simply false, and reflect Azerbaijan's usual victim-blaming approach in an attempt to deny its responsibility for its grave violations of existing international obligations. Any reference to environmental concerns of any sort is nothing but a bogus pretext to justify further depriving the population of Nagorno-Karabakh of their means of subsistence and denying them their fundamental rights, in grave violation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, along with other fundamental international instruments.

Ironically, it is a well-established fact that, when it comes to matters of civil and political liberties, Azerbaijan's democratic record is one of the lowest ranked in the world, with a proven track record of repressions of protests and of detaining dozens of political prisoners to punish them for exercising their right to assemble. The suggestion that there could be civil-society activists out there capable of launching a campaign of a similar size and scope without the direct guidance and supervision of the State authorities is therefore implausible to say the least. In fact the so-called protesters under the environmental pretext are on record as raising demands that are incompatible with the 9 November 2020 trilateral statement.

It should be noted that the ongoing blockade of the Lachin corridor is not just a single isolated case but yet another demonstration of the systematic violence masterminded by the Azerbaijani authorities with the aim of subjecting the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to ethnic cleansing. Earlier this year, we informed Member States about the deliberate disruption of the gas supply to Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijan, which

lasted for several weeks, in harsh weather conditions. We also brought to the attention of the members of the Council that Azerbaijan has been consistently resorting to violence targeting Armenian civilians, including those performing agricultural activities, as well as of the psychological pressure imposed on the population of border communities with the use of loudspeakers and State-sponsored cyberattacks. Furthermore, as a result of the Azerbaijani offensive operation, the Parukh village of Nagorno-Karabakh has been effectively ethnically cleansed.

To pre-empt the upcoming batch of counter-accusations from the representative of Azerbaijan regarding the so-called environmental concerns, if Azerbaijan is interested in an independent assessment of the environmental situation, then consideration could be given to deploying a United Nations fact-finding mission to look into the issue.

As far as the issue of landmines is concerned, I would like to note that mining activity, if any, has been limited to the territory of Armenia, strictly for defensive purposes, as Azerbaijan not only threatens on a regular basis to use force against Armenia, but it also continues to keep under illegal occupation more than 140 square kilometres of the sovereign territory of my country.

Indeed, had Azerbaijan been genuinely interested in a comprehensive assessment of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, it would not be denying the international community access to the region. I would like to recall that, both during and in the aftermath of the large-scale aggression by Azerbaijan against Nagorno-Karabakh in the fall of 2020, both Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh supported the visit of the United Nations mission led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, with the involvement of other agencies, to provide the United Nations as well as the international community with a comprehensive picture of the humanitarian, security and human rights situation in Nagorno-Karabakh.

To this day, the obstruction of safe and unimpeded access for the international community to Nagorno-Karabakh has served the sole purpose of creating a conducive atmosphere in which lies and fabrications can be conveniently sustained and cultivated. Once again, I would like to reconfirm Armenia's readiness to facilitate humanitarian access to dispatch fact-finding missions on the ground.

The collective pledge to leave no one behind is yet to be fulfilled for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. As we speak, a population of 120,000 people, including women, children and elderly persons, are being held hostage by Azerbaijan through a policy of State-sponsored intimidation of civilians. Their representative is here today to offer a new serving of lies and accusations to cover up the gross and massive human rights violations under the pretext of protests organized by so-called civil society activists.

Azerbaijan continues to disregard the provisional measures order of the International Court of Justice issued against Azerbaijan in December 2021, under the Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination in relation to the humanitarian obligations vis-à-vis Armenian prisoners of war, as well as on the need to address the pervasive anti-Armenian rhetoric, including at the level of public officials and institutions, among other measures.

The unabated provocations and aggressive actions of Azerbaijan have come to demonstrate that, in the absence of strong accountability measures, including the application of sanctions, the aggressor will be encouraged to continue testing the resilience and determination of the international community and of the Council in upholding its primary responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The claims of Azerbaijan that it has resolved the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by massive use of force, abolished all collective rights of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh and even eliminated the very name of this land populated by Armenians for millennia constitute clear warning signs of a premeditated genocidal policy. Azerbaijan claims that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which has been on the international agenda for the past 30 years, has become an internal issue on which they can deliver domestically. The facts emanating from Azerbaijan's actions, including the imposition and infliction of collective punishment on the entire population of Nagorno-Karabakh, are an indication of the opposite. The continued involvement of the international community is the only possible way of guaranteeing the rights and security of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.

We are cognizant of the fact that there are deep-running disagreements among the members of the Council related to the major ongoing crisis

in Europe. We are also aware that, because of the growing energy challenges, some members of the international community opt to engage more closely with the hydrocarbon-exporting State of Azerbaijan. We are convinced, however, that such engagement cannot, and should not, put the values and principles of justice, humanity, dignity and freedom on the line, and therefore cannot be conducted at the expense of the fundamental human rights and physical security of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Under the current circumstances, we urge the Security Council to take actions to demand Azerbaijan to fully respect the provisions of the trilateral statement of 9 November 2020 and to immediately and unconditionally unblock the Lachin corridor by removing all obstacles for safe, secure and unimpeded transport and communication; deploy a fact-finding mission to Nagorno-Karabakh and the Lachin corridor to assess the humanitarian situation on the ground; and ensure unimpeded humanitarian access for United Nations agencies to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenia calls on the Security Council to uphold its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, to take the appropriate measures and to strongly condemn the aggressive actions of Azerbaijan, which pose an existential threat to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh and their right to live freely and in dignity without fear of outside oppression.

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

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): Azerbaijan expresses its profound regret over the exploitation of the Security Council by Armenia for a State-led campaign of manipulation, distortion and falsification. This body was established as a guardian of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and non-interference in their domestic affairs are the cornerstones in that regard. Yet it is utterly unacceptable that this body continues to be abused by certain forces to encroach upon the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country.

I would like to start with some important clarifications with regard to terminology, as its accurate use is essential for ensuring proper respect for the sovereign rights and responsibilities of States under the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

First, it is undeniable that only geographical names established by legitimate and competent national authorities in relation to their sovereign territory must be recognized and used at the United Nations. Therefore, it is pertinent to recall that what Armenia and some Council members erroneously call “Nagorno-Karabakh” is the internationally recognized sovereign territory of Azerbaijan, which was under unlawful Armenian occupation for nearly 30 years — I underline, nearly 30 years of Armenian occupation. That was consistently reaffirmed in resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993). The legal name of this area of Azerbaijan is now the Karabakh Economic Region or, in its shortened equivalent, the Karabakh region.

Secondly, when it comes to the situation around the Lachin road, Azerbaijan resolutely rejects all of Armenia’s claims as completely false, null and void. The Lachin road is situated entirely in Azerbaijan within its Lachin district, which was invaded and occupied by the armed forces of Armenia in May 1992. The population of Lachin, over 77,000 residents, was forced to leave their homes and properties, and the town and its surrounding villages were looted and burned by Armenian troops. Following the 44-day war two years ago, in accordance with paragraph 6 of the trilateral statement of 10 November 2020, the Lachin district was returned to Azerbaijan, while Azerbaijan committed to guarantee the security of persons, vehicles and cargo moving along the Lachin road. Neither the Government of Azerbaijan nor the protesting activists have blocked the Lachin road. The regime for the movement of citizens, goods and vehicles along the road remains unchanged, with peacekeepers continuing to perform their duties to protect the route. Video clips shared on social media show unimpeded passage of the various types of vehicles, including ambulances and humanitarian convoys.

The claims regarding alleged humanitarian consequences of the situation are equally false. This is nothing but another manifestation of reckless manipulation by Armenia of the situation for obvious malign political purposes. There is no impediment whatsoever as to the supply of goods for the use of local residents, or in terms of the delivery of essential medical services.

Since the matter was brought to the attention of the Council, I would like to take this opportunity to inform its members about the course of events that eventually led to a civil society group holding a demonstration on the Lachin road.

In violation of paragraph 4 of the 10 November 2020 trilateral statement, over more than two years ago, Armenia has been refusing to fully withdraw its armed forces and illegal armed formations from, and continuing illegal military activities in, the territory of Azerbaijan where the Russian peacekeeping contingent is temporarily deployed.

While speculating on the humanitarian importance of the Lachin road, at the same time Armenia has actively used it for military purposes, including for the rotation of armed forces personnel and the transfer of weapons to the territory, in clear violation of international law and paragraph 6 of the trilateral statement.

Apart from that, in violation of paragraph 1 of the trilateral statement, which committed the sides to terminate all hostilities, Armenia not only refuses to share a complete set of maps of the hundreds of thousands of mines it indiscriminately laid on the territories of Azerbaijan during their occupation, but has planted new mines on the territory of my country in the post-conflict period.

Since August of this year, more than 2,700 mines produced in Armenia in 2021 have been detected in the sovereign territories of Azerbaijan. Evidently, those mines were transferred from Armenia via the Lachin “humanitarian” road. Last Wednesday, seven people were injured and one killed by a mine explosion in the Kalbajar district of Azerbaijan. The area where the incident took place was far from the former line of contact, and the mines were planted there during the withdrawal of the armed forces of Armenia from the Kalbajar district under the terms of paragraph 6 of the trilateral statement. In total, after the signing of the trilateral statement, 276 citizens of Azerbaijan have become mine victims — 46 of them were killed, including 35 civilians. The conclusion is clear: Armenia tries to inflict the maximum human losses possible in order to impede Azerbaijan’s major reconstruction projects in the liberated territories and the return of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons to their homes.

Furthermore, the Lachin road has also been misused for illicit trafficking in minerals and other resources from the territories of Azerbaijan where the Russian peacekeeping contingent is deployed. This problem is not new. Azerbaijan has repeatedly brought to the attention of the international community irrefutable, well-documented evidence attesting to large-scale unlawful economic activities in the formerly occupied territories of Azerbaijan, in flagrant violation of international law.

As a matter of fact, out of the 151 mineral deposits identified in those territories prior to the occupation, 52 sites were exploited for the first time in the period between 1993 and 2020. Furthermore, several of the pre-conflict mining operations were expanded and intensified. Besides being an illegal act of exploitation of the natural resources of a sovereign State, mining and quarrying operations were conducted with inadequate environmental oversight and supervision, including a lack of effluent treatment and site rehabilitation, in gross disregard for environment-related technical standards. That has created environmental impacts, such as deforestation and land degradation; suspended sediment pollution, or turbidity, in rivers; and chemical pollution of water, soil and biota.

For the entire Azerbaijani public therefore, the pillage and plundering of our sovereign natural wealth, as well as the harsh environmental consequences, are a legitimate source of serious concern. Since November 2020, the illegal exploitation of mineral deposits in the area of the temporary deployment of peacekeepers, especially in the Gyzybulag gold and Demirli copper molybdenum deposits, has not stopped, on the contrary, it has expanded even further. In addition to being illegal per se, those activities cause serious damage to the environment, polluting the area and destroying the fragile ecosystem.

Unfortunately, despite the fact that a road map was agreed with the command of the peacekeeping contingent, 10 days ago a group of unidentified persons prevented officials from the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan, the State Service for Real Estate Affairs under the Ministry of Economy of Azerbaijan and the AzerGold Closed Joint Stock Company from conducting on-site inspections of the mineral deposits of concern and assessing the potential

environmental damage and risks, including the impact on underground and surface water resources. That incident caused justified indignation among the public and led to peaceful protests by eco-activists on the Lachin-Shusha road, which continue to date, as the relevant State organs of Azerbaijan are still denied access to the sites in question.

Under the trilateral statement, the Lachin road is envisaged to be used exclusively for humanitarian purposes. The abuse of the road for any other purposes, not least for illegal military activities, such as the planting of mines, or illegal trafficking in Azerbaijan's natural resources, constitutes a material breach of the trilateral statement and cannot be tolerated. Azerbaijan will continue defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity and the rights and safety of its citizens by all available means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

On a particular note, Azerbaijan is keen to guarantee to its citizens of Armenian origin the rights and freedoms enjoyed by all the citizens of Azerbaijan on an equal and non-discriminatory basis, in accordance with its Constitution, legislation and international obligations. This is a domestic matter, in which Azerbaijan will not allow external interference.

Azerbaijan has taken consistent steps towards fostering dialogue with local Armenian residents, as was the case during the construction of a new Lachin road and in relation to the exploitation of the Sarsang water reservoir. Such contacts need to be further supported and encouraged. However, apparently Armenia and some third countries are becoming increasingly uncomfortable with the positive developments on the ground and resort to all kinds of provocations to raise tensions and undermine the fragile normalization process. The recent appointment of a notorious businessman — Ruben Vardanyan — to the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, who has no connection to the region and is directly involved in the illegal exploitation of the natural resources of Azerbaijan, along with intensified destabilizing actions by some external actors, is a clear manifestation of this.

Azerbaijan is committed to regional peace, stability and development. The establishment of good-neighbourly relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan is key for building a secure, stable and prosperous South Caucasus through full-fledged regional normalization. Azerbaijan's position in that regard is clear, principled

and consistent and is based on international law and established international practice. It was Azerbaijan that, right after the end of the conflict, initiated the process of the normalization of inter-State relations with Armenia based on mutual recognition and respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity within their internationally recognized borders, including through the signing of a peace treaty based on those principles.

We reiterate our call on the international community to persuade Armenia to reciprocate the offer of Azerbaijan, abide by its international obligations, put

an end to its illegal activities, cease territorial claims and political and military provocations, abandon its aggressive rhetoric and actions, redress the harm caused to Azerbaijan and engage in good faith in direct negotiations to find peaceful diplomatic solutions to all issues pertaining to inter-State relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia. We once again urge third parties to refrain from one-sided actions and statements emboldening revanchism in Armenia to the detriment of emerging perspectives of regional normalization.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.