



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

Provisional

942nd meeting

Wednesday, 20 September 2023, 11 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Rama/Mr. Hoxha. (Albania)

<i>Members:</i>	Brazil	Mr. Vieira
	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Ecuador	Mr. Lasso Mendoza
	France	Ms. Colonna
	Gabon	Mr. Ndong Sima
	Ghana	Mr. Akufo-Addo
	Japan	Mr. Kishida
	Malta	Mr. Abela
	Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia/Mr. Lavrov
	Switzerland	Mr. Berset
	United Arab Emirates	Ms. Almheiri
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Dowden
	United States of America	Mr. Blinken

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

Upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter through effective multilateralism: maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

Letter dated 6 September 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2023/653)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

Upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter through effective multilateralism: maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

Letter dated 6 September 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2023/653)

The President: I would like to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, Presidents, Ministers and other high-level representatives present in the Security Council Chamber. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Kuwait, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Mexico, Montenegro, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Türkiye, Ukraine and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite the following to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council; His Excellency Mr. Bujar Osmani, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; and His Excellency Grand Chancellor Riccardo Paterno di Montecupò, Sovereign Order of Malta.

I also propose that the Council invite His Excellency Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States and International Organizations of the Holy See, to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*speak in Russian*): You were hasty, Mr. President, in saying "it is so decided". We have two questions.

First and foremost, we wish to ask you on what basis you propose to give the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the floor before the members of the Security Council speak, many of whom are also represented at the level of Head of State or Government.

The second question I wish to pose is, on what basis are you inviting the Minister for Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia to today's meeting in his capacity as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe?

The President: I take note of the remarks made by the Russian delegation. In response, I would like to confirm that notice of the planned speaking order was given to all Council members in advance. In my view, it would have been preferable had this procedural matter been resolved at a technical level prior to the start of this open debate so that we would have been able to proceed immediately to the substance of our deliberations today.

I wish to recall that paragraph 33 of presidential note S/2017/507, agreed by consensus, states:

"when non-members are invited to speak to the Security Council, those who have a direct interest in the outcome of the matter under consideration may speak prior to Council members, if appropriate."

Given the subject of today's open debate, we believe that inviting President Zelenskyy to speak before Council members is amply in line with paragraph 33. Moreover, giving the floor to President Zelenskyy would provide an opportunity for Council members and the other Member States participating today in such impressive numbers to respond to his remarks. Previously, in February of this year (see S/PV.9269), the Russian delegation raised the same issue and was assured by the then Council President that ample precedents existed of non-Council Member States taking the floor before Council members. Several cases were cited at the time — and others could be mentioned. I would add that, at each of the previous five Security Council meetings at which President Zelenskyy was invited to participate, he spoke before Council members. I want to assure our Russian colleagues and

everyone here that this is not a “special operation” by the Albanian presidency, but a continuation of a long and well-established practice of the Council. Today’s speaking order is therefore in full conformity with the Council’s guidelines and practices.

As for the second question, I have some difficulty in understanding what the problem is, because the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has an important role and is here because its contribution to this meeting is considered of the essence. Yes, the OSCE representative here is an Albanian from North Macedonia. If the representative of the Russian Federation could be more explicit about what the problem is, I would be happy to help him.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*speak in Russian*): With pleasure, Mr. President. We do not believe the arguments that you have advanced are compelling. A number of members of the Security Council will be represented in the Chamber today at the Head of State level. You tried to explain why the Ukrainian President has been prioritized. However, that had nothing to do with the Security Council’s procedures. We could understand the logic when we discussed Somalia — the President of Somalia spoke first here (see S/PV.9356) — but he was the only President from among those present. There are indeed precedents related to other items on the Security Council’s agenda. But in those cases, a specific practice has unfolded. Such a practice is linked to the particularities of certain regions and has nothing to do with the situation in Ukraine.

I would like to warn you, Mr. President, that if you bang the gavel now to formally implement your decision, the Albanian presidency will be tainted with an egregious precedent of violating established practice in the Security Council for the benefit of one delegation, which time and again continues to demonstrate, with support from the Western members of the Council, that rules do not apply to it and everything is permissible. From the beginning, Western members of the Council three times pushed through the participation of Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Security Council meetings via video-teleconference. That constitutes blatant disregard for the authority of this key organ. Leaders from other States find time in their schedule to personally travel to New York to speak before the members of

the Council. In the course of the more than 75 years of the existence of the Organization, speaking at the Security Council has been seen as a privilege. The same applies to statements at the General Assembly rostrum. But during the Assembly’s recently held emergency special session, the representative of Kyiv decided to send a video postcard. At the same time, Western delegations allege that last year Volodymyr Zelenskyy was unable to leave the country due to extraordinary circumstances. Nonetheless, those “circumstances” did not prevent him from travelling to the United States to visit Washington, D.C. Yet at that time he did not deign to travel personally to the United Nations.

The Council President’s violation of the Council’s working methods is fraught with risks of undermining the authority of the Security Council, which they are trying to transform into a one-man show. For that, the Albanian presidency has convened an open debate in which a large group of supporters from NATO countries is present. It is clear to many, if not most, that today’s meeting will be nothing more than a spectacle. I would like to stress, for the sake of protocol and for those who are trying to distort our position, that we do not object to the participation of the Ukrainian President at this meeting. But that needs to happen in line with the rules of procedure and existing practice, according to which countries invited under rule 37 speak after the members of the Security Council — especially when there are both members of the Council and other representatives here represented at the level of Head of State or Government.

Turning to the participation of the Foreign Minister of North Macedonia as the current Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), our bewilderment at that has nothing to do with his nationality, Mr. President. We objected to his presence in his capacity. We informed the Albanian presidency about that just yesterday. As far as we understand it, there has been no discussion in Vienna. According to the principles agreed by the OSCE Permanent Council, any statements made by the Chairperson-in-Office, the OSCE Secretary General or official representatives authorized by them must be in line with their mandates and must not depart from the consensus decisions of the OSCE. If the Albanian presidency insists on allowing Mr. Osmani to speak during today’s meeting, we believe he can voice only the consensus position of that organization.

Separately, I would note that, due to the destructive approach adopted by Western delegations, the OSCE has long in no way participated in or contributed to the process of resolving the Ukrainian crisis, but has only exacerbated the situation. We believe that the attempts by Western delegations to push through Mr. Osmani's participation, which run contrary to the established Security Council and OSCE practices, reflect their fervent desire to advance one-sided rules of the game, which benefit them only, as part of the infamous rules-based order. We urge members of the Security Council to adopt a principled position on this issue and speak out against such an approach. We regret that that Albanian presidency has demonstrated blatant disregard for the procedures and practice of the Security Council, placing the common political and ideological interests of NATO above the obligations of the Council presidency, which is the guardian of the procedures and should adopt an impartial position. Unfortunately, Albania has been unable to manage that today.

The President: I must say that, coming from you, this lecture about violating the rules in this building is quite an impressive show.

As you repeated many times that the violation here is about President Zelenskyy speaking before Council members, there is a solution for that, if you agree: stop the war and President Zelenskyy will not take the floor. What makes his presence here important — and why it is important for all of us to hear him first and then discuss — is because of you, not us.

I take note. We will continue with our meeting.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*speak in Russian*): I wish to draw your attention, Mr. President, to the fact that you are today acting as President of the Security Council, not speaking in your national capacity as the representative of Albania. Your objective is to conduct a meeting as set out in the Security Council's rules of procedure, instead of providing political assessments in your capacity as the President of the Council.

The President: I just responded to you after you addressed me as the Albanian Prime Minister and after you continued to say incorrect things about what the procedure is here. If you do not want me to answer as the Albanian Prime Minister, do not provoke me as such.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*speak in Russian*): I addressed you only in your capacity as the President of the Security Council, and never as the Prime Minister of Albania. I stress once again that I am in a procedural dialogue with you, and not a substantive dialogue. Please refrain from making political assessments at the beginning of your statements to the Council.

The President: It was you who talked about NATO, about Albania being in NATO and about NATO countries coming here today, which has nothing to do with my role as President of the Security Council. May we now, with your permission, continue the meeting normally?

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2023/653, which contains the text of a letter dated 6 September 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, transmitting a concept note on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to Secretary-General António Guterres.

The Secretary-General: The Charter of the United Nations is our road map to a more peaceful world. The tools and mechanisms founded on the principles of the Charter are a how-to manual to resolve conflict. Together, our collective efforts over the years have contributed to preventing war on a global scale and saving millions of lives — through peacemaking and preventive diplomacy, United Nations peacekeeping operations, disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, humanitarian and development programmes and activities to promote human rights.

(*speak in French*)

This week, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Summit adopted a rescue plan for the SDGs, which are an essential tool for preventing conflicts and crises of all kinds. Multilateralism works. It is essential and effective. But multilateral tools and mechanisms are weakening. Faced with rising tensions and geopolitical challenges, some multilateral frameworks are failing,

while others that are urgently needed do not yet exist. The number of conflict-related deaths almost doubled last year. United Nations peace operations are under unprecedented pressure. Nuclear disarmament is at a standstill. And there is no adequate global framework to address the security threats posed by new technologies. I urge States to go further and do better to renew their commitment to the obligations of the United Nations Charter, use all the diplomatic tools that it puts at their disposal, give priority to the prevention of conflicts and crises and take into account the proposals for the new frameworks and tools presented in the New Agenda for Peace.

(spoke in English)

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, in clear violation of the United Nations Charter and international law, is aggravating geopolitical tensions and divisions, threatening regional stability, increasing the nuclear threat and creating deep fissures in our increasingly multipolar world. All that comes at a time when cooperation and compromise for multilateral solutions are needed more than ever to tackle challenges ranging from the climate crisis to unprecedented levels of inequality and disruptive technologies.

The United Nations organs have been clear in condemning the war. The General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted a resolution demanding that Russia leave Ukraine (General Assembly resolution ES-11/1), as well as a resolution rejecting Russia's efforts to annex Ukrainian territory (General Assembly resolution ES-11/4). I have consistently and repeatedly called for a just and sustainable peace in Ukraine, in line with the Charter and international law — for Ukraine, for Russia and for the world.

Russia's invasion was followed by relentless, systematic attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure and services, including health and education facilities. The war has killed or injured tens of thousands of civilians, destroyed lives and livelihoods, traumatized a generation of children, torn families and communities apart, devastated the economy and turned vast areas of farmland into deadly minefields. Attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure must stop immediately. Nearly half of Ukraine's population — some 18 million people — need humanitarian assistance and protection. More than 6 million Ukrainians have fled the country.

The United Nations has worked collectively to mitigate the impact on people, both in Ukraine and around the world, and to support civilians. Our humanitarian programmes have stepped up, distributing aid to more than 8 million people this year, in partnership with more than 450 humanitarian organizations, half of them Ukrainian. The International Atomic Energy Agency has established a presence at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear plant and other major Ukrainian nuclear sites to monitor safety, security and safeguards. Together with the International Committee of the Red Cross, we successfully organized the evacuation of civilians from the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol last year.

United Nations agencies have documented evidence of shocking and widespread human rights violations, including conflict-related sexual violence, arbitrary detention, summary executions — mostly by the Russian Federation — and the forcible transfer of Ukrainian civilians, including children, to territory under Russian control or to the Russian Federation. That documentation is vital for accountability. Accountability for all human rights violations is crucial, in line with international norms and standards.

The war contributed to an unprecedented surge in global food prices, threatening millions with hunger and poverty. Starting in July 2022, we succeeded in mitigating that impact through the Black Sea Grain Initiative and the memorandum of understanding between the United Nations and the Russian Federation. During its one-year period of operation, the Black Sea Grain Initiative, together with the memorandum of understanding on facilitating exports of Russian food products and fertilizers, helped to reduce global food prices by more than 23 per cent from the record high they had reached in March last year. The Black Sea Grain Initiative enabled the export of nearly 33 million metric tons of grain and foodstuffs and allowed the World Food Programme to transport 725,000 metric tons of wheat for humanitarian aid to countries, including Afghanistan and Somalia. Under the memorandum of understanding, the United Nations delivered solutions on several of the most challenging areas of trade facilitation for Russian food and fertilizers, with continuous work on the remaining issues.

We deeply regret that Russia ended its participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative in July, and that immediately upon leaving Russia launched a bombardment of Ukrainian ports and grain storage facilities on the Black Sea and the Danube River. Attacks

against terminals and grain stores are unacceptable and such assaults must end. Civilian shipping in the Black Sea has also been threatened. Further escalation could instantly shock the markets and destabilize the region. Volatility and uncertainty have already returned to international grain markets, while supplies from the harvest in Ukraine pile up.

The bombardment is also undermining our efforts in the implementation of the memorandum of understanding with the Russian Federation. It has led many of those whose goodwill is needed, notably in the private sector, to question whether there is any real interest in returning to the Black Sea Grain Initiative. We remain engaged with all the parties with the aim of ensuring safe and secure exports of grain and fertilizer from Russia and Ukraine, and those exports must be put on a stable footing without the repeated threat of interruption. I am grateful to the Government of Türkiye for its contributions and urge all Member States to support our efforts.

The United Nations continues to work towards a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, in line with the Charter, international law and the resolutions of the General Assembly. I urge all countries to do their part to prevent further escalation and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace. We are fully committed to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. This war is already causing limitless suffering. Its continuation risks further perilous escalation. There can be no alternative to dialogue, diplomacy and just peace.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine.

President Zelenskyy (*speak in Ukrainian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): Exactly 574 days of pain, loss and struggle have already passed since the start of the full-scale aggression launched by a State that for some reason is still represented here among the permanent members of the Security Council. Russia has killed at least tens of thousands of our people and turned millions into refugees by destroying their homes. A majority of the world recognizes the truth about the war. It is a criminal and unprovoked aggression by Russia against our nation, aimed at seizing Ukraine's territory and resources. But it is not

only that. Through its aggression, this terrorist State is willing to undermine all the international norms designed to protect the world from wars. I am grateful to all countries of the world who have recognized the Russian aggression as a violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

Ukraine is exercising its right to self-defence. Helping us to do that with weapons, imposing sanctions and putting all possible pressure on the aggressor, as well as voting in favour of the relevant draft resolutions, means helping to defend the Charter. The General Assembly has adopted resolutions that clearly acknowledge the fact that Russia is the only progenitor of the war, and yet nothing has changed for Russia at the United Nations. However, it is situations like this one that have changed everything for the United Nations itself. We should recognize that our Organization is at an impasse where the issue of aggression is concerned. Humankind can no longer hope for United Nations assistance in defending the borders of sovereign nations. World leaders are seeking new platforms and alliances that may be able to reduce the disastrous scale of these problems, which are being addressed within these walls with rhetoric rather than real solutions, and with efforts to compromise with killers rather than save lives. We must be uncompromising in defending life if we are to succeed in saving lives.

However, I would not be here today if Ukraine had no proposals for just such specific solutions. In my address to the General Assembly yesterday (see A/78/PV.4), I said that the Ukrainian peace formula had become the basis for modernizing the world's existing security architecture and for restoring the real power of the Charter and the rules-based international order. I would now like to present some of the specific details from the peace formula, in particular point 5, which concerns the implementation of the United Nations Charter and the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity and the world order.

The whole world can see what has rendered the United Nations impotent. Regrettably, the seat on the Security Council that Russia occupied following the collapse of the Soviet Union, using behind-the-scenes manipulation, is now occupied by liars whose job is to whitewash Russia's aggression and genocide, and any action at the United Nations that could have stopped it, either from the Security Council or the General Assembly, has been rendered null and void by the privilege accorded the aggressor in that seat.

The power of veto in the hands of the aggressor has forced the United Nations into this impasse. Today any nation, whatever it is — whether it is one of hundreds of millions or a small nation; whether it is a nation that bravely defends its independence or one whose long history of independence can help others; whether it is a State in need of help or a State that can provide genuine support; whether it is a State that relies on its army or one that considers the Charter of the United Nations, not the army, to be its first and last line of defence — regardless, the current United Nations system still leaves every single one of those countries with less influence than the veto power possessed by a few and misused by one, Russia. And that is to the detriment of every other member of the United Nations.

We hear the word “inequality” too often in the General Assembly these days, with all kinds of nations, large and small, talking of inequality. And it is precisely inequality that renders the United Nations ineffective. It is regrettable that the Security Council is nothing but the world’s most visible platform, and I believe and know that the United Nations is capable of more. I am confident that the Charter can actually work in favour of peace and security globally. However, for that to happen, the years of discussions of projects for United Nations reform must be translated into a viable reform process. The priority should not merely be representation on the Council. The use of the power of veto is an issue that demands reform, and it could be a key reform. That is something that can restore the power of the United Nations Charter.

Five hundred and seventy-four days of full-fledged Russian aggression means 574 reasons for changes in this Chamber. And the number of votes in favour of those changes actually amount to billions. An absolute majority of people in the world want to live in a world free of aggression, and the only ones opposed to that are a few obsessed individuals in Moscow. The veto should not serve those who are obsessed with hatred and war.

We are seeing increasing support at the United Nations for the idea that the power of veto should be voluntarily suspended in cases of mass atrocities. But we can also see that Russia will not voluntarily give up that stolen privilege, and that the General Assembly should therefore be given real power to overturn the veto. That is the first necessary step. If it is impossible to stop the war because all efforts to do so are blocked by the aggressor or by those who condone the aggressor’s

behaviour, we must bring that issue to the attention of the General Assembly. In the event of two thirds of votes reflecting the will of nations of Asia, Africa, Europe, both Americas and the Pacific region — in other words, a global qualified majority — the veto can be effectively overcome, and those General Assembly resolutions made legally binding on all Member States.

The second step is that the Security Council must be fully accountable to the nations of the world. I welcome the proposals of various leaders to expand the representation of nations on the Council. The composition of the permanent members of the Security Council should reflect current realities and justice. Ukraine believes it is unfair that there are billions who do not have permanent representation on the Council. The African Union should have permanent representation. Asia deserves broader permanent representation. It cannot be considered normal when nations such as Japan and India or those of the Islamic world are not permanent members of the Security Council.

If we take into account the changes that have taken place in Europe, notably the fact that Germany has become one of the key global guarantors of peace and security — that is a fact — then it is also a fact that Germany deserves a place among the permanent members of the Security Council. Latin America must have permanent representation on the Council, as should the Pacific States. However, we should not focus all our attention only on those top seats. We need to expand participation in and access to the activities of the Security Council and its subsidiary bodies for all members of the General Assembly that are not acknowledged aggressors. At the same time, any participation in Security Council membership should be suspended when a member resorts to aggression against another nation in violation of the Charter.

The third step is the creation of a system for preventing aggression through early response to actions that violate States’ territorial integrity and sovereignty. It is time. The nations of the world should agree on a mechanism that responds to aggression in order to protect others. It should be one that all nations would want to ensure their own security. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has shown what such a mechanism could entail — among others, powerful sanctions against the aggressor, not just at a stage when an incident such as Bucha has already happened but at the stage when the build-up of an invading army is still going on. Anyone

wanting to start a war should see exactly what they stand to lose before making such a fatal mistake.

The issue of the application of preventive sanctions should be automatically submitted for consideration by the Security Council when any member of the General Assembly reports a threat of aggression. Ukrainian soldiers now are doing with their blood what the Security Council should be doing through voting — stopping the Russian aggression and upholding the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

As for territorial integrity, that element of both the Charter of the United Nations and our peace formula is inextricably linked to the issue of clearing our State's sovereign territory from the occupiers. Occupation is an inexhaustible source of dynamite lurking beneath the international rules-based order. Therefore, I will suggest concrete steps to be taken for the strengthening of the security architecture, using Ukraine as an example. The following steps are highly specific, just like us Ukrainians.

First, there must be a complete withdrawal of all Russian troops and military formations, including its Black Sea Fleet or whatever leaky remnants of it are left, as well as the withdrawal of all Russian mercenaries and paramilitary formations from the entire sovereign territory of Ukraine within our internationally recognized borders as of 1991.

Secondly, Ukraine's effective control over the entirety of its State borders and exclusive economic zone, including in the Black and Azov Seas, as well as the Kerch Strait, must be fully restored.

In fact, only the implementation of those two points will result in an honest, reliable and complete cessation of hostilities.

Reforms of our international institutions have usually been made in the wake of great tragedies and major wars. We should not wait for the aggression to end — we need to act now. Our aspirations for peace should drive such reforms. When I was preparing the Ukrainian peace formula, I based its points exclusively on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. That is precisely what will enable the Ukrainian peace formula to become global. The nations that engage with the formula realize that they are working for the rules-based international order, for the protection of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States, for

the protection of human rights and for the prevention of aggression and genocidal policies.

Naturally, the epicentre of such efforts should be in this very Chamber of the Security Council and, to an even greater extent, the General Assembly Hall. If the reform of the United Nations and its organs is necessary to that end, then we should not be afraid of such reforms. We are ready to work together with States Members of the United Nations participating in the peace formula to work on relevant draft resolutions and amendments to the United Nations Charter.

I would like to make it clear to everyone in the world what exactly Ukraine is proposing when it appeals to the nations of the world and calls on them to join in implementing the peace formula. Every country can demonstrate its leadership within the framework of one or several, or perhaps even all, points of the peace formula.

We will establish groups based on the various points of the peace formula in which national security advisers to Heads of State and Government and diplomatic representatives can work jointly. Those groups will be tasked with developing a list of decisions and legislative proposals to be implemented in order to ensure the corresponding point of the peace formula is fulfilled. We are ready to hold a founding summit for leaders. We will then convene 10 conferences at the advisory, diplomatic and parliamentary levels and in accordance with the 10 points of the peace formula. Subsequently, the drafts prepared will be submitted for consideration by Heads of State and Government at the relevant summits. Therefore, all peace-respecting nations of the world will be able to actively participate in the restoration of peace.

Cooperation is always the key word for Ukraine in international relations. It is also the key word for peace. Therefore, let us allow peace to prevail. May our institutions and our cooperation be ever stronger.

I thank all those present for their attention and thank the President for the invitation and the opportunity to address the Council.

Glory to Ukraine.

The President: I thank President Zelenskyy for his statement.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Prime Minister of Albania.

I thank all participants for being here today. The presence of such a considerable number of dignitaries speaks to the very high importance of the issue at hand. I also thank the Secretary-General for his remarks, which resonate with and reflect the values and principles of our Organization. I am grateful to President Zelenskyy for his presence here at such a tragic moment in his country's history. His strong words translate the pain of his compatriots and convey very clearly, together with his firm determination, the grit of his people and the unwavering hope of his nation.

While the world today more than ever needs an acute sense of responsibility from all of us to confront the multiple challenges and threats facing our planet — conflicts; the unconstitutional seizing of power; and climate change, with devastating floods and unforgiving droughts, including unpredictable and severe wildfires — we are instead witnessing increasingly disruptive attitudes, reckless acts and growing conflictuality within and among States. In many parts of the world, examples of force have proliferated, while the force of example has become a rarity.

Until not long ago, who could have imagined that, in the third decade of the twenty-first century, a disastrous war started by a permanent member of the Council would put Europe at risk by brutally undermining all of the principles that gave birth to the United Nations? Until only a few years ago, who could have imagined that an unjustified, unjust and unprovoked act of military aggression by a big country against a new democracy would not be immediately, promptly and universally condemned by all nations that gather here and share the same goals and principles?

How does one understand the “yes, buts”, or the calls on both sides with arguments in order to avoid calling a spade a spade, refusing to call brutal aggression by its only and real name: a humanmade tragedy that is inflicting untold suffering on the Ukrainian people, but that is also reverberating across all regions of the world, hurting growth, raising prices and threatening with hunger and starvation hundreds of millions of people?

An act of aggression in the heart of Europe cannot be Europe’s problem alone, as some think, as some say or as some whisper. Cynics may think that Ukraine is just a problem dropped into the lap of the democratic West to deal with. They may even mumble that what goes around comes around, implying that

it is natural payback for what might have happened before, elsewhere, in other times. Is it? Really? I invite everyone to think twice.

This war of aggression must be everyone’s business. Let me remind us of that by paraphrasing Martin Niemöller’s tragic account:

“First, they came for Georgia — I did not speak out. Then they came for Crimea — it was not my country, so I did not speak out. Then they came for the whole of Ukraine, but I was not Ukrainian, and I did not speak out. Then they came for me, but there was no one left to help or defend me.”

As we speak, more than 26,000 civilians have passed away. Tomorrow the number will be higher, and it will increase every day for as long as this war continues. Given the inexcusable nuclear sabre-rattling that keeps coming time and again from different layers of the Kremlin, one is right to fear that, one day — God forbid — this madness could turn into something far worse — and let us not forget, as unimaginable today as today’s war was yesterday.

We have a duty to help those in need, and in that respect to help Ukraine and Ukrainians. We may of course differ on how to support Ukraine in its fight for freedom and dignity. We may have different views on how to end the war. Let us discuss them. But it would be an insult to the intelligence of the Organization if we were to fail to unanimously recognize and say loudly who is the aggressor and who is the aggrieved. It is the same sharp difference between war and peace, as Tolstoy reminds us. I ask members to go back and read him. If we fail to admit that crystal clear truth, we are not only letting down Ukraine and its people but we are failing our core responsibility, compromising the future and betraying all our children from Brazil to Spain, from the Arctic to the South Pole.

The struggle of Ukraine is also the struggle of everyone who aspires to live in a world in which nations are free and equal, territorial integrity is indisputable and the right to live in peace is unquestionable. The contrary is not only short-sighted but utterly dangerous for everyone under this roof. That is why everyone has to do their part. Albania is a small country. Our continued support for Ukraine may not change the dynamics on the battleground, but it contributes to not rewarding aggression, not accepting annexation and not letting the obvious become dubious. I once again repeat that we may differ on how to deal with this and

we may have different views on how to move towards peace, but how can we possibly have different views on who is the aggressor and who is the aggrieved?

(spoke in French)

The primary duty of the Security Council is to act decisively on behalf of and in the service of the entire world. We cannot blame the increasing number of people who wonder: What is the Security Council doing? The Council has sadly been held hostage by the abusive exercise of the right to the veto. It has paralysed the Council, but it has nonetheless not reduced it to silence, as this meeting attests. We cannot allow the power of the rules-based order and the values that bring us together to be replaced by the rule of force and opposing values. We refuse to be complicit in dangerously overturning the world order, the consequences of which would be unthinkable, if not tragic, for all.

(spoke in English)

Let me recall the experience of the Western Balkans. We have seen where the path of brutality can lead and its tremendous cost for all, including the perpetrators. History has confirmed that those who have seen war as a shortcut to achieve their goals have ended up regretting it forever. Russia has tried many times to use — or better, misuse — the changed reality in the Western Balkans, in particular the birth of the Republic of Kosova, to justify its neo-imperial dreams and the subsequent nightmare that it has exported to Ukraine. No matter how hard one may try, Kosova, whose independence has been confirmed by the International Court of Justice under Chapter XIV of the Charter, cannot be allowed to serve as a pretext for a territory grab or an illegal annexation. If today a lasting peace in our region is within reach, that has to do first and foremost with the lesson learned that the most efficient way to overcome the past and shape a common future is through cooperation, not through division — that is, by promoting the free movement of people, goods, services and capital, and not by raising artificial barriers, and by building bridges for our kids to enjoy freedom and prosperity, regardless of their language, race or nationality. It is not by erecting walls for our ghosts of the past to seek and hide in endless blame games.

I will conclude with the following. The Preamble to the United Nations Charter calls on us to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another, as good neighbours. Important decisions are never a matter

of chance; they are always a matter of choice. Albania has made its choice to stand for peace, development and progress, to stand with the aggrieved, not with the aggressors, and to stand with and for Ukraine.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

I call on His Excellency Mr. Guillermo Lasso Mendoza, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador.

President Lasso Mendoza (*speak in Spanish*): Let me first commend Albania for its presidency of the Security Council for September. I also thank you, Sir, for convening this critical debate, as it has been almost 19 months since the beginning of the military aggression against Ukraine. I also underscore the briefing by Secretary-General António Guterres, and I support his continued call on the Russian Federation to give peace a chance.

This war cannot be allowed to continue another day. The Russian Federation must immediately cease its military operations in accordance with the 16 December 2022 order of the International Court of Justice, the highest court of this Organization. In addition to destroying Ukraine and costing the lives of thousands of people, the protracted war, which was initially denied as such and was subsequently claimed to be merely a special military operation, is undermining the very purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the principle of territorial integrity. When the Organization was founded, “[w]e the peoples of the United Nations” resolved “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war ... and for these ends, to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours”. That is the foundation on which the Charter rests — and there is only one Charter.

Ecuador has said it before and we say it again today: There is not one Charter for the South and another one for the North, or one for the West and another one for the East. The content of the Charter is the same in all languages. It is one and indivisible. There is not one version in Russian and another one in Spanish. In no case is the use of force authorized against the territorial integrity or political independence of a State, or in any way that runs counter to the purposes of the United Nations. How can we uphold the principles of the

Charter for the sake of effective multilateralism, while at the same time invading a neighbouring country, or not condemn such an invasion and show indifference or complicity? On the contrary, in order to defend the territorial integrity of States, we must respect and implement the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and maintain peace and security, not attack other countries and abstain in voting on disputes in which we are involved.

There are those who attribute the peace and security crisis to the Charter's alleged inadequacies. However, no reform or new institutional framework will be sufficient to maintain peace and security if States are not determined to respect and implement those higher principles. What poison could be more lethal to multilateralism than the military invasion and occupation of a neighbouring country? This war, which has affected the entire dynamics of the Council's work, continues to put our confidence in the United Nations system to the test. Nevertheless, aside from the difficulties that the Council is facing in achieving a concrete response, I must highlight the enormous contribution that the United Nations has made for the benefit of thousands of people and humanitarian partners on the ground, providing emergency assistance, particularly to women and children. I acknowledge the Secretary-General's humanitarian efforts, including through what was the Black Sea Grain Initiative, and we call for it to be resumed.

There are corrosive narratives that seek to justify this war, but no justification has any legal standing. We have been told, for example, that the invasion against Ukraine is in response to an alleged plot by Western countries to weaken Russia. We have been told that Russia is acting in self-defence against anti-Russian policies towards certain inhabitants or aimed at Russian culture. However, what greater act of xenophobia or contempt for the other can there be than war against that other? Nor is it true that the so-called global South had taken a different stance. One need only look at the voting pattern in the General Assembly during its adoption of resolutions on the territorial integrity of Ukraine by an overwhelming majority. Needless to say, no veto can contain the Assembly's strength when the time comes to defend the territorial integrity of its members. Moreover, that majority is not a majority merely of alignment, as certain parties claim.

Ecuador rejects any invasion, regardless of the country that commits it, and all the more so if that

country occupies a permanent seat in this Chamber. As Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali put it, only one power is left that can impose order on chaos, and that is the power of principles that transcend the changing perceptions of expediency. Among the hundreds of thousands of people who fled the war there were nearly 1,000 Ecuadorians, many of whom we had to evacuate as part of emergency operations with a support team in Ukraine and its neighbours. They were among the first to feel the impact of the severe humanitarian consequences of the invasion, which continue to deteriorate a year and a half later as millions are forced from their homes, with women, girls and boys being the worst affected.

Moreover, this war continues to have global consequences. It has exacerbated the nuclear threat, aggravated global food insecurity and especially affected the economies of developing countries. For all these reasons, I call on Council members to individually and collectively redouble our support to advance the efforts and good offices of the Secretary-General at the humanitarian and political levels, so that progress can be made without further delay towards a just peace based on territorial integrity and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The President: I thank President Lasso Mendoza for his statement.

I now call on His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana.

President Akufo-Addo: I thank you, Mr. President, for making me a part of this important meeting on how we can better uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, with the unfortunate tragic events in Ukraine serving as a backdrop. I am grateful to Secretary-General António Guterres for making a compelling case for the shared benefits we derive as Member States when we choose to be peace-loving, as the Charter requires.

None of us here in this Chamber can claim to be unaware that our world is in a troubled place. The sharp differences in geopolitical competition among major Powers, and the intense convergence of the crises in the world, particularly crises of conflict, climate change, inequality, unconstitutional changes of Government and unsustainable development, have undermined global trust and solidarity and unravelled the common logic that has prevailed since 1945, which is that it is better to suffer the inadequacies of the multilateral

system for the greater good than to pursue the chaos of the unknown for national advantage.

In that context, and mindful of the reality that neither geographic boundaries nor political ideologies have been able to isolate any State from the burden of the prevailing crises, Ghana continues to hope in earnest for an end to the war on Ukraine and for the construction of a future marked by peaceful coexistence, mutual cooperation and brotherly relations between the two neighbouring countries. The fact is that the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine is plainly wrong, and we have said so on many platforms. The war has taken an increasingly devastating toll on the people of Ukraine and the rest of the world, particularly those of us in Africa, and has challenged our shared values of international peace and security.

The turnings of the war have constrained collective efforts to reinvigorate multilateralism and impeded common approaches to effectively confronting a number of complex challenges of our time. For us in Ghana, however, the unfolding situation is not a lost cause. While we are rightly distressed by what is happening around us, we believe that together we can still mitigate the challenges of the unknown if we are prepared to cooperate in a peaceful, carefully managed process of reform of global institutions that would redistribute responsibilities and authority fairly to reflect the present realities of our world. We also believe that history has a lesson to teach, and the painful lessons of the two World Wars inspired the solemn commitments made by the founders of the United Nations to refrain from the use of force in relations among States. That common understanding — to replace force and might with the rule of law, cooperation and the peaceful settlement of disputes — underpins the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and remains valid, if we are to avoid a Hobbesian state of affairs in inter-State relations.

We must thus work together strongly to reverse the growing fragmentation of our world and the intervention of nationalist ideologies and actions among commonly accepted rules. Violations of sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and attempts to normalize such violations or selectively apply the rules of international law and the Charter of the United Nations would only undermine the promise of the past and the hope for future generations.

It is in that regard that Ghana continues to be a firm advocate for dialogue and diplomacy in resolving the Russian war against Ukraine. We do not do so because of want of a resolution of the dispute at any cost. United in our belief with many others, we believe the only pathway for a comprehensive, peaceful and sustainable resolution of the dispute is one that must be just and based on the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

In taking a principled position on the conflict in Ukraine, Ghana has been concerned about the ramifications of the war on the global community and multilateralism. We therefore welcome the opportunity that the New Agenda for Peace provides, which is to reset our common understanding of how, among other factors, the way we relate with each other as States can reinforce the peremptory norms of international law that have provided us stability for almost eight decades and to find new ways of addressing old challenges that continue to undermine States and the sovereignty of nations.

In support of the choices we need to make for a renewed and inclusive and multilateralism, I would like to share three key messages.

First, many of the organs and institutions established by the Charter of the United Nations, such as the Security Council, continue to be relevant, but the Council's composition and working methods need renewal through the completion of the long-outstanding reform. In support of the common African position on Security Council reforms, contained in the Ezulwini Consensus, Ghana urges the transformation of a dialogue among Member States to envisage an end-point that delivers a Security Council that is representative and that also addresses the historical injustice done to the continent of Africa.

To overcome knotty discussions around the veto, we encourage the ongoing efforts to limit its use and the subsequent placement of a moratorium on its use that will lead progressively to its removal over a reasonable period of time. We cannot continue to have a Security Council that is structurally limited from being effective and yet demands universal acceptance for its decisions. As with many other things in life, with changes, we need to adapt, and with authority, comes a responsibility that must be kept.

Secondly, the peace of the world is indivisible and integrated with all other global arrangements beyond

our collective security. Our efforts of preventive diplomacy must be comprehensive and broad-based. We need to be aware that, for instance, inimical economic and financial policies have an enduring impact on peace and that global policies on the structure and function of international institutions cannot remove the centrality of peace from their *raison d'être*. We must strengthen in a comprehensive and integrated manner our efforts to prevent the outbreak of violence and the resurgence of new conflicts.

Thirdly and finally, multilateralism at the global level must be accompanied by effective regional partnerships — partnerships that help to anticipate better threats to our common humanity, which prioritize specific means for resolving differences and which cut across regions to enhance their effectiveness when required. When we fail to leverage fully the potential of regional bodies, we can only have ourselves to blame when multilateral efforts at the global level are unable to deliver.

In conclusion, I call again for peace in Ukraine, and emphasize, as my delegation has often done in the Council, that there is no alternative to winning the peace in Ukraine. We hope the Council can help the United Nations to assume an enhanced role in support of peace efforts around the world, but in particular in Ukraine, for the benefit of all peoples.

The President: I thank President Akufo-Addo for his statement.

I now call on His Excellency Mr. Alain Berset, President of the Swiss Federation.

President Berset (*speak in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his statement. In addition to his statement, I would like to thank him for his steadfast commitment to the advancement of peace and dialogue, especially when it is most difficult.

First of all, I will address the facts, and they are not positive. The times we are living in are marked by the questioning of multilateralism, the multiplication of conflicts and the deepening of inequalities. There is a question as to what is the shared responsibility of those of us who have convened at this meeting. At the very minimum, we must recall the fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations — I have a copy with me, of course — and ensure that we

fulfil the mandate entrusted to us. That essential text expresses the common will of all peoples to live in peace. It is a guarantor of universal values and the main principles of multilateral order — from the sovereign equality of States to the prohibition of the use of force, from the defence of human rights to the economic and social progress of peoples.

In war, the suffering of civilians is the common denominator. It is always civilians suffering. However, international humanitarian law imposes obligations on us and on all parties to conflict.

As Council members know, Switzerland, as the depositary State of the Geneva Conventions and faithful to its long-standing humanitarian tradition, is committed to defending and upholding international humanitarian law. And as an elected member of the Council, we are committed to fulfilling the clear and unique mandate conferred by the Charter of the United Nations on us — all of us — namely, the maintenance of international peace and security.

With Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, the Charter of the United Nations is being violated on a massive scale. Yet, in meeting after meeting, Russia, a permanent member of the Council, is denying its responsibility for the thousands of dead and wounded in Ukraine, its responsibility for the millions of displaced persons and, finally, its responsibility for all those plunged into deep insecurity, wherever they are in the world, including Russia.

The consequences of the war are global. Global food security has been undermined. The energy sector has been disrupted. Nuclear risks are increasing. Inequalities are growing.

Switzerland demands that the Russian Federation respect the Charter of the United Nations and its principles. Switzerland once again calls on the Russian Federation to cease hostilities, to withdraw its troops from Ukrainian territory and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

While the Security Council's mandate is clear, it is not always as effective as it should be. While the objective is to save lives, guarantee global security and reinforce stability, our discussions on certain issues get bogged down in endless cycles that fail to produce results. The Council must not squander the most precious asset at its disposal — the trust of those

who rely on its work to guarantee them a life of dignity and peace.

We have the means to fulfil our mandate, as illustrated by the 26 resolutions we have adopted since January. Those resolutions seek to promote peace and security in Colombia, Afghanistan, Iraq and South Sudan. These examples remind us that the Security Council — even if it is more difficult than before — has retained and must retain its capacity for action. Of course, the Council must urgently be reformed. For many years, Switzerland has been advocating for greater representation on the Council, starting with African countries, and for better working methods. However, we all know that no reform can replace the will of States to respect the Charter. In his New Agenda for Peace, the Secretary-General outlines the steps to be taken now to strengthen our action and to bolster multilateral action — namely, closing ranks behind the principles of universality, solidarity and trust.

Switzerland is assuming this duty of solidarity. In Ukraine, we are committed to alleviating the suffering of the civilian population, rendering justice to the victims and promoting a political solution to the conflict in due time. We have opened our doors to people fleeing the war, are providing humanitarian aid and are working with the Ukrainian Government on the process of reconstruction.

The challenges that Ukraine is facing are immense. To give just one example, an area four times the size of Switzerland is contaminated with mines in Ukraine. Switzerland is not a very large country, but it is still a vast area in Ukraine. Here, too, we are supporting humanitarian demining with our know-how and the supply of equipment. And we plan to further step up those commitments. It is in that spirit of solidarity that we are calling for the Black Sea Grain Initiative to be relaunched. Switzerland expresses its gratitude to the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts in that regard.

Multilateralism is the only option to achieve peace, to move away from individualistic thinking, in which each side seeks only to defend its own interests and maximize its own influence, to relaunch the search for shared, sustainable solutions that guarantee a dignified life for all.

Against that backdrop, Switzerland welcomes the diplomatic initiatives towards a lasting peace in Ukraine — a peace rooted in the principles of the United Nations Charter, cornerstone of the peaceful

coexistence of all States. Never have isolationism, threats and violence provided the answers to the dysfunctions and imbalances of the world in which we live.

The Council can successfully fulfil its mandate and advance the common desire of all people to live in peace and security only if it acts in a spirit of trust and collaboration. That spirit must guide the actions of everyone around this table. Today we have the opportunity to change things, but we must truly want it, for lasting peace is worth more than any fleeting gain.

The President: I thank President Berset for his statement.

I now call on Prime Minister of Japan.

Mr. Kishida (Japan) (*speak in Japanese; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to commend the leadership of Albanian Prime Minister Rama for convening this high-level Security Council meeting on multilateralism and the situation in Ukraine. I also welcome the participation of President Zelenskyy of Ukraine.

Today the international order based on the rule of law is facing an unprecedented crisis and challenge. It is the Charter of the United Nations that is the foundation of the international order. The Charter stipulates that the Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. We are gathered here today because of the infringement of the rule of law by one of the permanent members of this very Council.

I visited Kyiv and Bucha in March and went to the sites of the tragedies. I will never forget the heartbreaking feelings I felt then. I renew my determination that Japan stand with Ukraine. We condemn in the strongest terms Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which is a clear violation of international law, including the United Nations Charter.

That aggression must be stopped now, and the troops must be withdrawn immediately and unconditionally. Any attempt to unilaterally change the peacefully established status of territories by force or coercion must not be tolerated anywhere in the world. Irresponsible nuclear rhetoric, the deployment of nuclear weapons in Belarus and the occupation and militarization of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant pose a threat to world peace and stability. Russia's nuclear threats, let alone its use of nuclear weapons, are unacceptable. The

international community cannot accept any abuse of the veto power to obstruct the decisions of the Security Council and undermine its credibility.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has exacerbated concerns about a rule of lawlessness around the world. We must not allow the creation of a second or third Ukraine. It is essential to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine conforming to the principles of the United Nations Charter in order to protect an international order based on the rule of law.

Japan supports President Zelenskyy's sincere efforts to uphold the basic principles of the United Nations Charter in his Peace Formula. In Hiroshima in May, together with leaders of a wide range of countries, including Ukraine, I affirmed the importance of the principles of the Charter, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and the peaceful resolution of disputes. Following those discussions, two meetings of national security advisers on Ukraine were held. Japan welcomes the participation of many countries, including the so-called Global South, and will continue to make a positive contribution.

We must not forget that the aggression against Ukraine has caused serious problems such as refugees, food and energy insecurity and threats to nuclear safety and has led to suffering for many people around the world. Japan is committed to working together with other nations to promote efforts to support the afflicted people. Japan strives to promote human-centred international cooperation to overcome differences in regimes and values in order to protect human dignity.

Never has effective multilateralism, the theme of today's debate, been more needed. We must overcome numerous calamities, including the aggression against Ukraine, and realize multilateralism rooted in a spirit of solidarity. Bearing that in mind, I myself have engaged in a series of discussions with leaders of various countries. Japan also organized an open debate on the rule of law and peacebuilding during our presidency of the Security Council (see S/PV.9241) in order to listen to the diverse voices of the international community. Japan will further strengthen its efforts to resolve issues concerning international peace and security, including through preventive diplomacy, while upholding the rule of law under multilateralism.

Now is the time to return to the unshakable principles that we, the Member States, have built up since 1945, including the United Nations Charter, and

to work towards a world of cooperation — not one of division and confrontation. To that end, strengthening the functions of our Organization is an urgent task. The Council must be enlarged, in terms of both its permanent and non-permanent seats, in order to better reflect the realities of today's world, including Africa. We must now take concrete action in that regard, looking ahead to the Summit of the Future and the eightieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations. It is time to move forward in making the United Nations a platform that listens to people facing difficulties and works with them to confront challenges together, aiming for a world that respects human dignity.

Mr. President: I now call on the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta.

Mr. Abela (Malta): I would like to begin by thanking the Albanian presidency for organizing today's high-level open debate. I also thank the Secretary-General for sharing his thoughts with us earlier today.

Some 12 years ago, soon after the outbreak of the Arab Spring, Malta launched its bid to serve on the Security Council. That was a time, I remember, of turmoil and instability in our immediate neighbourhood, but also a time of hope and aspirations. The decision to embark on that journey stemmed from our commitment to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, which are timeless, universal and an integral part of our foreign policy. Our unwavering belief is that multilateralism — the major theme we are discussing today — holds the answer to contemporary challenges, and that all countries should engage proactively to that end, which served as our point of departure back then. Today, as an elected member of the Council, those convictions continue to serve as our guiding light.

More than ever, the world needs an effective multilateral system with the United Nations at its core. We must redouble our efforts to uphold — and defend — the fundamental principles that unite us. We must promote our common values, at a time when they are being aggressively undermined and threatened. We must protect them and adequately respond to any contempt for them. At the same time, we must not lose sight of the fact that we are living in a world in which conflicts are unfortunately on the rise. The nuclear threat still looms. The climate crisis is unfortunately spiralling out of control. Democracy and human rights are under systematic attack. Global inequalities are deepening. Disinformation and misinformation

campaigns are feeding and amplifying tensions. No country can tackle those complex and existential challenges by itself. They require our full and collective attention. Effective multilateralism is the only avenue for addressing them in a decisive and holistic manner.

If we are to reach those ambitious goals, we cannot resign ourselves to living in a world in which might is right. Last year, the Russian Federation began its aggression against Ukraine, violating its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Those acts constitute a blatant violation of the United Nations Charter and international law. They were overwhelmingly deplored and rejected by the General Assembly, which called for Russia's immediate withdrawal of its military forces and a cessation of hostilities. This war profoundly undermines the multilateral system. It weakens and destabilizes this very Council. The immediate and long-term consequences of such actions by a permanent member cannot be emphasized enough. On the occasion of this debate, I reiterate Malta's full support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. I equally underline Ukraine's inherent right to self-defence, as enshrined in Article 51 of the Charter.

The Ukrainian people have paid the heaviest price as a result of this unjustified and unprovoked war of aggression. It has led to another human-made catastrophe, as the world was still struggling to find the path to normality following a crippling pandemic. All wars are devastating, and this one is of course no exception. The lives lost are gone forever and will never be recovered. The scars of those wounded, injured and traumatized by conflict never fully heal. Once the fighting is over, the road to recovery will still be a long and arduous one. Through its actions, Russia not only brought war back to Europe's shores but also generated a global food crisis that has seriously affected most developing countries around the world. And while the Black Sea Grain Initiative allowed almost 33 million tons of grain to be shipped, Russia's unilateral decision to pull out of the deal has caused grain prices to unfortunately soar upwards. I once again state Malta's uncompromising position that using hunger and food supplies as weapons of war is completely unacceptable.

In conclusion, I reiterate and emphasize once again that there can be no peace in our future if the strong can trample on the weak. There can be no peace if international law can be brushed aside when geopolitical interests so demand it. There can be no peace if the

rights of States and individuals can be suspended or revoked at any time. Malta's commitment to peace, dialogue and multilateralism remains as strong as ever. We remain firm in our resolve to stay at the forefront of the defence of the United Nations Charter. No matter how difficult or disheartening the circumstances may seem, we must never give up on peace. We must never give up on dialogue. We simply cannot afford to do so.

In this time of upheaval, our collective response is to redouble our efforts over and over again and continue to invest in our multilateral system. In doing so, we must also reform the Council to make sure that it is truly fit for purpose in today's world. That means a Council that is more transparent, more effective, more representative, more accountable and more democratic. Meanwhile, we remain convinced that the only step towards a lasting peace in Ukraine is for Russia to immediately cease all hostilities. It must unconditionally withdraw all its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

The President (*speak in French*): I now call on the Prime Minister of the Republic of Gabon.

Mr. Ndong Sima (Gabon) (*speak in French*): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his informative briefing on the terrible state of affairs of the war in Ukraine, 19 months after its outbreak.

From the outset of the hostilities in Ukraine, my country has expressed its opposition to the war and condemned the violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity. We have unequivocally reaffirmed that the principles of the Charter of the United Nations are the glue that binds us together. Above all, Gabon has continued to call for an immediate ceasefire and for good-faith negotiations between the parties to silence the weapons.

Five hundred and seventy-four days after the start of this deadly war, the shock wave has continued to spread beyond the borders of Ukraine. Millions of people have been forcibly displaced within Ukraine and millions more are now refugees beyond its national borders. Thousands of deaths have been recorded, while indiscriminate shelling continues to target essential infrastructure, sparing neither nuclear power plants, bridges, hydroelectric dams, schools or hospitals. And the nuclear threat itself has continued to expand.

The international system, especially the agricultural sector, as well as many value chains, continues to suffer in the fallout from the conflict, which contributes to a rising global humanitarian toll by causing not just hunger, precarity, despair and fear but invisible wounds as well, such as hatred and the rejection of others. It is not yet clear how much the trauma suffered by children, women and men exposed to the horrors of war will be reflected in the final tally of the conflict. In that regard, it is worth asking how far the horror must go before de-escalation is finally considered. What level of terror must be reached before the warring parties agree to talk?

Since the hostilities began, every rostrum at the United Nations has been a stage for invective and antagonism, providing neither relief nor remedy for those fallen in the trenches or crushed under the debris of the battlefield and in the cities and villages of Ukraine. An alternative to war is possible. It must be found in the existing channels outlined in the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of the Council. We must reconcile without delay with the spirit of the Charter, whose beating heart is our shared determination to save present and future generations from the scourge of war.

My country reiterates its call on the parties to negotiate in good faith to put an end to the war. We call on them to show restraint and responsibility. Everything must be done to advance towards de-escalation and create conditions conducive to diplomacy. Gabon firmly believes that we must reject any unilateral action that makes the situation more difficult, hardens positions and fuels antagonism. I reiterate my country's opposition to the war in Ukraine and to all wars in the world, in particular the many chronic and cyclical wars in Africa. Rejecting the mindset of war is neither running away nor a sign of cowardice, and it is certainly not an opportunistic stance.

It is vital to draw from the indelible lessons of the history of unjust wars, which have hammered home the fact that the people who provoke or prolong those wars are rarely the winners. Beyond the criminal responsibility that can be established, the court of history is the most implacable of all, and that is why rejecting the mindset of war means upholding the noble ideals of the United Nations. My country has a long-standing tradition of peace that has never been denied. Even when we have had to make existential choices about our future, we have always been able to choose

peace. We will continue to defend that ideal, which for us remains an ontological imperative. Because war is contrary to the values of the United Nations and the Security Council, every day of war calls into question our will, mandate and credibility.

In conclusion, I want to work together with the parties to restore peace in Ukraine, because we stand for peace in Ukraine. We will support each peace process, each step towards dialogue and each initiative through diplomatic channels aimed at silencing the weapons in Ukraine. We will support the initiatives for peaceful coexistence between Russia and Ukraine.

The President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Dowden (United Kingdom): I am proud to sit here today in solidarity with President Zelenskyy. He and the Ukrainian people have met Russia's invasion of their country with bravery and courage, and I pay tribute to their fortitude. Ukraine's fight against Russian aggression is not only a fight for freedom but for the principles on which the United Nations itself is based. They are principles underpinned by the Charter of the United Nations, which says that all States' sovereignty is equal, territorial integrity is inviolable, disputes should be settled peacefully and that we must work together to protect those things.

When Russia's tanks rolled into Ukraine, they trampled on every one of those principles. They have done so ever since. Every missile, bomb, false arrest and piece of propaganda has been a flagrant assault not only on freedom but on our multilateral rules-based system. If we allow Russia to lay waste to what we have built here, the risks to the world order, the risks to us all, are grave. For more than a year and half, Ukraine has been suffering the terrible consequences of Russia's war of choice. We must never forget the human costs — 9,500 civilians killed, 17,000 people injured and reports of half a million military casualties on both sides. Russia has callously targeted schools, hospitals and even playgrounds. Ukrainians have been tortured and raped. Men, women and thousands of children have been forcibly deported from their homes. And the devastation flows beyond Ukraine's borders. Thanks to the destruction of 280,000 tons of grain, the hungry and malnourished people of the developing world are also Russia's victims. That is why the United Kingdom will contribute a further £3 million to the World Food

Programme to continue President Zelenskyy's Grain from Ukraine initiative.

Of course, the only way to end the widespread suffering is through just and lasting peace. Ukraine has demonstrated its commitment to peace time and again, including in Copenhagen and in Jeddah this summer. But this summer Ukrainians have also shown on the battlefield that they are capable of restoring the sovereignty and territorial integrity that must be the foundations of any peace. Ukraine's counteroffensive has put Russia under pressure. In total, Ukraine has regained 50 per cent of the territory seized since the war began. And in Kharkiv and Kherson, the yellow and blue flag flies high once again. That flag is flying all over the world, reflecting the solidarity we feel towards Ukraine.

Yet we might wonder what difference that support makes when Russia seems so impervious to United Nations demands, when it seeks to fuels its aims with arms from sanctioned States such as Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and when it conducts sham elections on Ukraine's own sovereign territory. The truth is that Russia knows the power of collective action, and that is why it tries so hard to weaken and divide the international community.

Therefore, just as we need to confront our biggest challenges on global poverty, climate change and artificial intelligence collectively, we need effective multilateralism to achieve resolution, to seek justice for the many victims, to rebuild ruined cities and create new opportunities, to get grain exports flowing again, to help put Ukraine back on the path to prosperity and to secure peace. That is what we shall do together.

The President: I now call on the Secretary of State of the United States of America.

Mr. Blinken (United States of America): I thank you, Mr. President, for placing the focus of the Security Council on this critically important issue. I also thank the Secretary-General for the moral clarity that he has shown in dealing with Russia's war against Ukraine. We are grateful to have been able to welcome President Zelenskyy to the Council table and thank him for reminding us yesterday (see A/78/PV.4), today and every day what is at stake in the conflict, not just for Ukraine and for Ukrainians but for all of us.

Two weeks ago I was in Yahidne, a small Ukrainian town about two hours north of Kyiv. Russian forces

seized the village in the first days of the invasion. They went door to door, rounding up residents at gunpoint, and marched them to the local elementary school, where Russian soldiers had set up a command post. Then, soldiers forced more than 300 civilians — mostly women, children and elderly people — into a basement not fit for human habitation. It consisted of just a few small rooms, with no windows, no air circulation and no running water. The soldiers held residents there for 28 straight days, using them as human shields, before fleeing when Ukrainian defenders arrived to liberate the town.

In Yahidne, two residents took me into the basement where they and others had been imprisoned. My guide said that they were packed together so tightly that they could barely breathe. There was no room to sit, let alone lie down. When they cried out to their captors that people were sick and needed medical care, a Russian soldier yelled back "let them die". My guide pointed to two handwritten lists of names on the basement wall. One was for the villagers whom Russian forces had executed; the other for the people who died in the basement. The oldest victim was 93 years old; the youngest six weeks old. The Russians only allowed the removal of bodies once a day. Children, parents, husbands and wives were therefore forced to spend hours next to the corpses of their loved ones.

I begin here because, from the comfortable distance of the Chamber, it is really easy to lose sight of what it is like for Ukrainian victims of the Russian aggression. That is what happened in just one building, in one community in Ukraine. There are many others like it. In the past week alone, Russia has bombed apartment buildings in Kryvyi Rih, burned down humanitarian aid depots in Lviv and demolished grain silos in Odesa. It shelled eight communities in Sumy in a single day. That is what Ukrainian families are living through every day. It is what they have experienced for the 574 days of the full-scale invasion. It is what they will endure tomorrow and the day after that for as long as Russia wages its vicious war.

President Putin has openly declared from the outset that the war is aimed at erasing Ukraine from the map as a sovereign country and restoring Russia's lost empire. In this war there is an aggressor and there is a victim. One side is attacking the core principles of the Charter of the United Nations, while the other fights to defend them. For over a year and a half, Russia has shredded the major tenets of the United Nations

Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international humanitarian law and has flouted one Security Council resolution after another. Let us review the situation.

First. Russia's invasion itself violates the central pillar of the United Nations Charter, namely, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.

Secondly, Russia is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine on an almost daily basis.

Thirdly, Russia continues to engage in reckless nuclear sabre-rattling, announcing that it is stationing nuclear weapons in Belarus and continuing to use Europe's biggest nuclear power plant and its employees as a shield for its aggression, risking catastrophic consequences.

Fourthly, Russia is weaponizing hunger. Thanks to the Black Sea Grain Initiative, brokered by the Secretary-General and Türkiye, approximately 33 million metric tons of grain reached global markets, driving down food prices around the world. Nearly two thirds of the wheat exported through that deal went to developing countries. Not only did Putin pull out of the deal, but Russia is now mining Ukraine's fields, bombing its ports and rails and burning its silos. As a result, Ukraine's wheat exports will likely fall by 2.8 million metric tons this year. That is the equivalent of 5.5 billion loaves of bread trapped in the world's breadbasket. Russia, meanwhile, is on track for a record year of grain exports. The hungrier the world, the more Moscow profits.

Fifthly, Russia is using Iranian drones to attack Ukrainian civilians. Russia procured those drones from Iran in violation of resolution 2231 (2015).

Finally, just last week, Russia hosted North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un. Putin said that they discussed ways to cooperate militarily, while Kim pledged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's "full and unconditional support" for Russia's war of aggression. Of course, the transfer of arms between Moscow and Pyongyang would violate multiple resolutions of the Council.

It is hard to imagine a country demonstrating more contempt for the United Nations and all that it stands for, especially a country with a permanent seat on the Council. President Putin is betting that, if he keeps doubling down on the violence and remains willing

to inflict enough suffering on enough people, the world will cave on its principles and Ukraine will stop defending itself.

But Ukrainians are not giving up, for they have seen what life would look like if they were to submit to Russian control. It is that basement in Yahidne. It is families having their children torn away from them and deported to Russia — children taken away from their parents and deported far away. It is the rubble of Mariupol. It is the mass graves of Bucha.

We are not giving up, either. Indeed, since we were last here (see S/PV.9269), a growing number of countries have come together to try to forge a different way forward. In June, over a dozen countries met with Ukraine in Copenhagen to discuss the path towards a just and lasting peace — one that upholds the United Nations Charter and its core principles. Two months later, more than 40 countries, including many members of the Council, carried forward that discussion with Ukraine in Jeddah. President Zelenskyy has put forward a 10-point plan for such a peace. President Putin has put forward nothing.

Some argue that continuing to stand with Ukraine and holding Russia accountable distracts us from addressing other priorities, such as confronting the climate crisis, expanding economic opportunity and strengthening health systems. That is a false choice. We can and we must do both. We are doing both. We must work together to tackle the global challenges that are affecting our people, to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and to invest in a world where all people have an opportunity to reach their full potential.

The United States is the world's leading contributor to those efforts. As President Biden told the General Assembly yesterday (see A/78/PV.4), we will continue to do more than our share to answer the imperatives of our time. At the same time, as President Biden has made clear, we must continue to shore up the pillars of peaceful relations among nations, without which we will be unable to achieve any of our goals. That is why we must send a clear message, not only to Russia but to all would-be aggressors, that we will stand up, not stand by, when the rules that we all agree to are being challenged — not only to prevent conflict, instability and suffering but to lay the foundation for all that we can do to improve people's lives in times of peace.

I opened by sharing the horrors that I saw in Yahidne. Let me conclude by telling Council members

what else I saw that day in Ukraine. I saw volunteers rebuilding homes that had been razed by Russian bombs, farmers harvesting fields, people reopening businesses, citizens clearing mines and unexploded ordnance and children returning to schools. In short, I saw a nation rebuilding and reclaiming its future. That is the right of all Members of our United Nations. That is what we defend when we stand up for the international order — the right of people not only to survive, but to thrive and write their own future. Our people, Ukraine's people and the people of all nations get to write their own future. We cannot — we will not — let one man write that future for us.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*speak in Russian*): The existing international order was built on the ruins, and following the colossal tragedy, of the Second World War. Its foundation was the Charter of the United Nations, the cornerstone of modern international law. Thanks mostly to the United Nations, a subsequent world war that could have ended in nuclear catastrophe was averted. Unfortunately, after the end of the cold war, the collective West, led by the United States, single-handedly designated itself as the master of the destiny of all humankind and, driven by its exceptionalism complex, began to increasingly disregard the legacy of the United Nations founding fathers. The West today selectively refers to the Charter's norms and principles on a selective case-by-case basis, strictly in line with its parochial geopolitical interests. That has inevitably led to undermining global stability, exacerbating existing tensions and igniting new ones. The risks of global conflict have also increased.

In order to manage and resolve events peacefully, Russia urges that all the provisions of the Charter be respected and applied not only in a non-selective manner, but holistically, including the principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in their internal affairs, respect for their territorial integrity and the right of peoples to self-determination. The actions of the United States and its allies demonstrate a systematic violation of the balance of obligations enshrined in the Charter. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of independent States in its place, the United States of America and its allies have egregiously and openly interfered in Ukraine's internal affairs. As United States Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland publicly and even proudly admitted, at the end of 2013,

Washington had spent \$5 billion on cultivating Kyiv politicians loyal to the West. All the facts pertaining to the engineering of the Ukrainian crisis have long been known, but they are trying to silence them in every possible way and suppress the narrative leading up to 2014. Therefore, the topic of today's meeting, proposed by the Albanian presidency, is very fitting, as it enables us to re-establish the chronology of events, specifically with regard to the relations among the main actors responsible for the implementation of the purposes and principles of the Charter.

During the period from 2004 to 2005, in order to bring a pro-American candidate to power, the West authorized the first coup d'état in Kyiv, forcing the Constitutional Court of Ukraine to adopt the unlawful decision to hold a third round of elections, not provided for by country's Constitution. Even more cavalier interference in its internal affairs was demonstrated during the second Maidan coup from 2013 to 2014. At that time, a slew of Western leaders directly encouraged participants in anti-government demonstrations to engage in acts of violence. Victoria Nuland herself discussed with the United States ambassador to Kyiv the composition of the future Government, which would be shaped by the putschists. At the same time, she pointed out to the European Union (EU) its real place in world politics, as Washington sees it. We all remember her obscene two-word curse. Notably, the European Union decided to let it pass.

In February 2014, the actors chosen by the United States became key participants in the brutal coup organized — I will recall — one day after the agreement reached through the mediation efforts of Germany, Poland and France between the legitimately elected President of Ukraine, Mr. Yanukovych, and the opposition leaders. The principle of non-interference in internal affairs had been repeatedly trampled on. Immediately after the coup, the putschists announced that their top priority was to suppress the rights of the Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine. And the residents of Crimea and the south-east of the country who refused to accept the results of the anti-constitutional seizure of power were declared terrorists. A punitive operation was launched against them. In response, Crimea and Donbas held referendums on their independence, in full compliance with the principle of the equality and self-determination of peoples, as enshrined in Article 1, paragraph 2, of the Charter. Western diplomats and politicians are turning a blind eye to this important

norm of international law with regard to Ukraine in an effort to reduce the entire background and essence of what is happening to the inadmissibility of violating territorial integrity.

In that regard, I would like to recall the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, adopted by consensus, enshrines the tenet that the principle of respect for territorial integrity is applicable to:

“States conducting themselves in compliance with the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples... and thus possessed of a government representing the whole people belonging to the territory” (General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV)).

The fact that the Ukrainian neo-Nazis who seized power in Kyiv in a coup d'état did not represent the population of Crimea and Donbas requires no proof. And the unconditional support of Western capitals for the actions of the criminal regime in Kyiv is nothing less than a violation of the principle of self-determination, following a gross interference in internal affairs. The adoption of racist laws banning everything Russian — education, media, culture — the destruction of books and monuments, the banning of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the seizure of its property that followed the coup d'état during the years of Poroshenko's and then Zelenskyy's rule was a defiant violation of Article 1, paragraph 3, of the Charter on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, gender, language or religion. It goes without saying that those actions directly contravened the Constitution of Ukraine, which sets forth the State's obligation to respect the rights of Russian and other national minorities. When we hear calls for the implementation of the peace formula to return Ukraine to the 1991 borders, the question arises as to who is calling for that? Are they familiar with the statements made by the Ukrainian leadership in terms of what they intend to do with the residents of the territories concerned. At the official level, threats have been repeatedly made concerning their physical or legal annihilation. The West has not been only refraining from deterring its protégés in Kyiv, but has been encouraging such racist policies.

Incidentally, in the same manner, EU and NATO members have for decades encouraged the actions of Latvia and Estonia in stripping the rights of hundreds of thousands of Russian-speaking residents, who have been designated as non-citizens. Now they are seriously discussing criminalizing the use of their native language. High-ranking officials have officially declared that the spread of information about the possibility for local students to take Russian remote-learning programmes should be considered as a virtual threat to national security, which must be addressed by law enforcement agencies.

Returning to Ukraine, the conclusions of the February 2015 Minsk agreements were endorsed by a special Security Council resolution, resolution 2202 (2015), in full compliance with Article 36, paragraph 2, of the Charter, which supports “any procedures for the settlement of the dispute which have already been adopted by the parties.” In this case, it concerned Kyiv and the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. However, last year, all the signatories of the Minsk agreements, except for Mr. Putin — I am referring to Merkel, Hollande and Poroshenko — publicly, and even joyfully admitted, that, when they signed the document, they had no intention of implementing it. They were simply looking to play for time in order to strengthen Ukraine's military capability and pump it full of weapons to be used against Russia. For all these years the EU and NATO have directly supported the sabotage of the Minsk agreements and pushed the Kyiv regime to use force to solve the so-called Donbas problem. That has all been done in violation of Article 25 of the Charter, according to which all members of the United Nations are obliged to “accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council”.

I would like to remind the Council that in the Minsk agreement package the leaders of Russia, Germany, France and Ukraine signed a declaration in which Berlin and Paris pledged to do a great deal, including helping to restore the banking system in Donbas, but did not lift a finger. They merely stood by and watched as, contrary to all those obligations, Poroshenko announced a trade, economic and transport blockade of Donbas. In the same declaration, Berlin and Paris pledged to help strengthen the European Union-Russia-Ukraine trilateral agreement in order to find a practical solution to trade issues of concern to Russia, and also to promote the establishment of “a joint humanitarian and economic space from the Atlantic to the Pacific”.

That declaration was also endorsed by the Security Council and subject to implementation in accordance with Article 25. However, that obligation undertaken by Germany and France's leaders was also an empty promise and yet another violation of the principles of the Charter.

Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Union's legendary Minister for Foreign Affairs, repeatedly pointed out that 10 years of negotiations were better than one day of war. Following that precept, we negotiated for years to reach agreements on European security, we approved the NATO-Russia Founding Act and adopted at the highest level the 1999 and 2010 declarations of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on the indivisibility of security. And since 2015 we have insisted on seeing the unconditional implementation of the Minsk agreements, which were concluded as a result of negotiations. All of that was done in full compliance with the Charter of the United Nations, which requires the establishment of:

“conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained”.

Our Western colleagues were trampling on that principle too when they signed all those documents while fully aware that they had no intention of complying with them. Speaking of negotiations, we are willing to have them even now, and President Putin has talked about that repeatedly, including very recently. I would like to remind the Secretary of State that President Zelenskyy has signed a decree prohibiting the conduct of negotiations with Mr. Putin's Government. If the United States is so interested in negotiations, I think that it would not be very difficult to give the order that Zelenskyy's decree be lifted.

In our opponents' rhetoric today we have heard only slogans about invasion, aggression and annexation, but not a word about the root causes of the problem or the years spent nurturing an openly Nazi regime that blatantly rewrote the outcomes of the Second World War and the history of its own people. The West has avoided any substantive discussion based on facts and respect for all the requirements of the Charter. It clearly has no arguments for an honest dialogue.

We get the definite impression that Western representatives fear professional discussions that would expose their demagoguery. While uttering incantations about Ukraine's territorial integrity, the former colonial

centres of empire are silent about the United Nations resolutions on the need for Paris to return the so-called French island of Mayotte to the Union of the Comoros or for London to withdraw from the Chagos archipelago and begin talks with Buenos Aires on the Malvinas Islands. Those so-called champions of Ukraine's territorial integrity now act as if they do not remember the aim of the Minsk agreements, which—I will remind them, concluded with the reunification of Donbas and Ukraine while guaranteeing respect for fundamental human rights, and above all the right to one's mother tongue. Having disrupted their implementation, the West bears direct responsibility for the collapse of Ukraine and for inciting civil war there.

Among other Charter principles where respect for them could have prevented the security crisis in Europe and helped to agree on confidence-building measures on the basis of a balance of interests, I would point to Article 52 of Chapter VIII, which enshrines the importance of developing the practice of peacefully settling disputes with the help of regional organizations. In line with that principle, Russia, together with its allies, has consistently advocated for establishing contacts between the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and NATO in order to facilitate the practical implementation of the decisions I just mentioned of the OSCE summits on the indivisibility of security, which stipulate, among other things, that

“no State, group of States or organization can have any pre-eminent responsibility for maintaining peace and stability in the OSCE area or can consider any part of the OSCE area as its sphere of influence”.

We all know that that was exactly what NATO was doing, attempting to establish its total superiority in Europe and now in the Asia-Pacific region. However, numerous appeals from the CSTO's highest bodies to NATO were ignored. As we can all see once again today, the reason for the arrogant position of the United States and its allies is their unwillingness to have any kind of dialogue on an equal footing with anyone. If NATO had not rejected the CSTO's proposals for cooperation, it might have been possible to avoid the many negative processes that led to the current European crisis, resulting from the fact that Russia has been either ignored or deceived for decades.

Today, when at the proposal of the Council presidency we are discussing “effective multilateralism”,

we should not forget the numerous instances of the West's ingrained rejection of any form of equitable cooperation. Consider Josep Borrell Fontelles' pearl of wisdom that Europe is a flourishing garden surrounded by jungles. That is pure neocolonialism, scorning the sovereign equality of States and the work of "upholding the principles of the Charter of the United Nations through effective multilateralism" that is the subject of our debate today.

In an effort to prevent the democratization of international relations, the United States and its allies are ever more openly and unceremoniously privatizing the secretariats of international organizations, circumventing established procedures in order to push through decisions creating mechanisms under their control and mandates that lack consensus while claiming the right to blame anyone whom Washington does not like for whatever reason. In that connection, I would like to remind the Council that it is not only Member States but also the Secretariat of our Organization that is required to strictly comply with the Charter. In accordance with its Article 100, the Secretariat is obliged to act impartially and shall not receive instructions from any Government.

We have already mentioned Article 2, and I want to draw attention to its key paragraph 1, which says, "The Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members". The General Assembly, building on that principle, reaffirmed in the Declaration of 1970, which I cited earlier, that

"every State has an inalienable right to choose its political, economic, social and cultural systems, without interference in any form by another State".

In that regard, we have serious questions about the Secretary-General's remarks on 29 March that

"autocratic leadership is not a guarantor of stability; it is a catalyst of chaos and conflict", [while] "strong democratic societies are places that are capable of self-correction — and self-improvement. They can enable change — even radical change — without bloodshed and violence".

One cannot help recalling the so-called changes brought about by the aggressive ventures of such so-called strong democracies in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and many other countries.

António Guterres went on to say that democracies "are centres for broad-based cooperation, rooted in the

principles of equality, participation and solidarity". It is noteworthy that all those statements were made at the so-called summit for democracy convened by President Biden outside the United Nations framework, whose participants were selected by the United States Administration on the principle of loyalty — loyalty not so much to Washington but to the ruling Democratic party in the United States. Attempts to use such forums among allies to discuss global issues are a direct contravention of Article 1, paragraph 4 of the Charter, which enshrines the importance of ensuring the role of the Organization as "a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends".

Contrary to that principle, many years ago France and Germany proclaimed a so-called alliance of multilateralists, to which once again only the obedient were invited. That in and of itself affirms the entrenched nature of the colonialist mentality and the attitude of its initiators to the principle of "effective multilateralism" that is on our agenda today. In parallel we saw the propagation of a narrative about the European Union as the ideal of that very multilateralism. Now there are calls from Brussels to expand the membership of the EU as soon as possible to include specifically the Balkan countries. The loftiest statements, however, are not about Serbia or Türkiye, which have been in hopeless talks about their entry for decades now, but rather about Ukraine. Josep Borrell Fontelles, who seemingly aspires to be the chief ideologist of European integration, recently said that the Kyiv regime should become a member of the EU as soon as possible. According to him, had it not been for the war, that would have taken years, and now there is a need and the chance to do so without respect for any criteria. Serbia, Türkiye and others can wait, but the Nazis can skip the queue to enter the ranks of the EU.

Incidentally, at the same Summit for Democracy, the Secretary-General proclaimed:

"Democracy flows from the United Nations Charter. Its opening invocation of 'We the peoples' reflects the fundamental source of legitimate authority: the consent of the governed."

It is useful to compare that premise with the track record of the Kyiv regime, which unleashed a war against a huge part of its own people —against those millions who did not consent to be governed by neo-Nazis and Russophobes who have illegitimately seized power and buried the Security Council-approved

Minsk agreements, thereby undermining the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Those who, contrary to the Charter of United Nations, divide humankind into democracies and autocracies better try to respond to the question of which category they place the Ukrainian regime in. I will not wait for an answer.

Speaking of the principles of the Charter, there is a question regarding the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly. For a while now, the team of Western States has been aggressively peddling the theme of the abuse of the veto right and, by quite improperly pressuring other States Members of the United Nations, have managed to secure the decision that, after each exercise of veto, the General Assembly will consider the matter. That is not a problem for us at all, because Russia is open about its approaches to all agenda items, we have nothing to hide, and it is not difficult for us to expound on our positions yet again. Besides, the use of the veto is an absolutely legitimate instrument provided for in the Charter of the United Nations to prevent the adoption of decisions that could potentially divide the Organization. But since there is a procedure for discussions in the General Assembly on the use of the veto, why not also consider why Security Council resolutions that were adopted without a veto, including those that were adopted many years ago, are not being implemented despite the provisions of Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations. Why should the General Assembly not consider the reasons for that, for example, with regard to the Security Council resolutions on Palestine, the whole range of issues related to the Middle East and North Africa, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and, naturally, resolution 2202 (2015), which approved the Minsk Agreements on Ukraine?

The issue of sanctions regimes is also worthy of attention. It is now the norm: the Security Council, after protracted negotiations, in strict compliance with the Charter of the United Nations, adopts sanctions against a particular country, and then the United States and its allies impose against the same State additional unilateral restrictions, which were not approved by the Council and are not included in its resolution as part of the agreed upon package. Another egregious example of that is the decision just adopted by the national legislative bodies of Berlin, Paris and London to extend restrictions against Iran that were set to expire in October, and which are subject to a legal termination, in accordance with resolution 2231 (2015). In other words, European countries and Great Britain declare

that, the Security Council ruling is no longer valid, but that makes no difference to them, because they make their own rules. This makes it all the more relevant to consider making it a rule that, after the Council adopts any sanctions resolution, no State Member of the United Nations would have the right to devalue it by introducing their own illegitimate restrictions against that same country.

It is also important that sanctions regimes adopted by the Security Council be time-bound, as their open-ended nature deprives the Council of flexibility in influencing the policies of the sanctioned Governments.

The so-called humanitarian limits of sanctions must also be considered. It would only be right that any draft resolutions on sanctions introduced to the Security Council should be accompanied by assessments of their consequences for civilians by United Nations humanitarian agencies, rather than by demagogic exhortations by Western colleagues that “ordinary people will not suffer”.

Evidence suggests that there is a deep crisis in international relations and the West’s lack of desire and will to redress the situation. However, I hope that a way out of this situation exists and will be found. To start with, everyone needs to recognize their responsibility for the fate of our Organization and for the fate of the world, based on historical context, rather than guided by parochial, short-sighted arrangements for the upcoming national elections of some Member State.

Let me recall once again: nearly 80 years ago, having signed the Charter of the United Nations, world leaders agreed to respect the sovereign equality of all States — large and small, rich and poor, monarchies and republics. In other words, even then, humankind recognized the need for an equitable, polycentric world order as a guarantee for the sustainability and security of its development. Therefore, today it is not a question of submitting to some rules-based world order, but of fulfilling all the obligations we assumed when signing and ratifying the Charter of the United Nations in their integral and interconnected nature.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the French Republic.

Ms. Colonna (France) (*speak in French*): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I would like to begin by applauding the statement delivered by the President of the Republic of Ukraine,

Volodymyr Zelenskyy. For more than 18 months, he has embodied and led the Ukrainian nation, giving a face and a voice to the millions of Ukrainians who are fighting for their freedom with admirable courage. His appeal to the Security Council, whose mandate is focused on international peace and security, is something we must respond to.

On 24 February 2022, Russia chose to engage in a war of aggression against a sovereign State, in violation of all its international commitments and the principles, which, for eight decades, have governed relations among nations — a war with no other motivation than the Russian desire to revive a fantasized imperial past, even though that has been condemned by history.

Ukraine is obviously the primary victim of this war. Ukraine and its people are suffering atrocities, crimes, bombings and torture on a daily basis. Thousands of Ukrainian children have been forcibly taken from their families and transferred to the Russian Federation. That is an abomination. Ukrainian women, men and children have been subjected to mass rape, which has been used as a weapon of war — another crime.

Yes, this war is a war against Ukraine, against the Ukrainian people, but it is also a war against the rules of international life. For it is a war against the most fundamental principles of our shared Charter of the United Nations: first and foremost, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. It is a war against the very idea of the United Nations.

It is a war against the foundations of our collective security, at a time when Russia has harnessed the security of civilian nuclear facilities as a lever to advance its aggression. It is a war against the shared heritage of humankind — be it cultural heritage, which Russia is targeting in Odesa and elsewhere, or global food security, with the sudden and cynical termination of the Black Sea Grain Initiative and more than 270,000 tonnes of grain systematically destroyed by Russian bombing in August alone. For a member of the Council to use hunger as a weapon is yet another transgression, following on a litany of others, in the moral framework within which should frame our action.

This is a war that concerns us all. That is why we will not waver. In the face of this aggression and the destabilization it is causing throughout the world, only a handful of States — and what States they are — support Russia's catastrophic choices. The General Assembly, like the Council, is largely united around our common

principles. Everyone understands that pitting the aggressor against the aggressor does not bring peace, justice or stability. If we allow Russian aggression to be rewarded today, let us make no mistake, we will have to reconvene the Council because other aggressions will occur, here or elsewhere, and no one will be safe anymore.

Almost all the countries around this table have, in their more or less recent history, experienced the trauma of war. They have experienced first-hand the destruction and human tragedy that war brings. They know that war is never a solution.

Tomorrow we celebrate the International Day of Peace, as we do every 21 September. In that context, all of us here have both a responsibility and a moral duty to act to put an end to Russia's aggression, as expressly requested by the General Assembly. On 21 September, like on every day since the beginning of the war, France will mobilize to ensure that this aggression fails, for the good of us all.

France will continue to act in accordance with our common principles. The first such principle is self-defence, as set forth in the Charter. We will continue to provide Ukraine with military and civilian support to help it resist this aggression and defend itself. The second principle is justice and dignity. We will continue to support Ukrainian and international courts to ensure that there is no impunity for the crimes committed by Russia. The third principle is solidarity. We will continue and increase concrete support for the countries hardest hit by the global food crisis caused by Russia, and we will boost our humanitarian aid to people in need all over the world.

The primacy the rule of law over the rule of force, international solidarity and support for those most in need are principles that lie at the heart of President Zelenskyy's peace formula. That is why, with every passing day, more and more of us endorse it. I call on all States that have not yet done so to work towards that goal.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Mr. Vieira (Brazil): I thank the presidency of the Security Council for organizing this meeting.

The conflict in Ukraine has added numerous stresses to the multilateral system, which was already subject to multiple complex challenges and increasing dissent. The current context of polarization and distrust

does not create favourable conditions for the multilateral forums of international peace and security to operate effectively. The world is facing the highest number of violent conflicts since the Second World War, and 2 billion people — one quarter of humankind — are living in areas affected by conflicts. Yet our collective institutions are not adequately responding to those challenges. As the concept note (S/2023/653, annex) of this debate rightly points out, the inability of the Security Council to adequately fulfil its mandate is undermining its credibility and leading to renewed calls for its long-overdue reform.

In these troubled times of daunting violations of the core values and principles of the United Nations, Brazil has been encouraging Member States to revive the spirit of San Francisco in the search for peace for present and future generations, which is the fundamental vision of this Organization. Brazil fully respects and upholds the right to self-defence of all Member States, under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

At the same time, we must recognize that the recent escalation in the conflict, with the introduction of even more sophisticated weapons and ammunition or the inadmissible threat of use of nuclear weapons, seriously undermines peace and security well beyond the battlefield, violating the core principles and provisions of the United Nations Charter.

That dynamic has grave consequences, above all, for the civilian population, in particular, women and children, who are disproportionately affected by wars. The destruction of civilian infrastructure worsens the humanitarian crisis, especially as winter approaches. Moreover, the persistent threat to the integrity of nuclear facilities risks a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions. As we have consistently noted, the war in Ukraine also affects other regions, especially as developing countries bear the burden of food and energy insecurity. We welcome the Secretary-General's effort to explore alternatives to alleviate the suffering of millions of people who, once again, face hunger or the threat of hunger.

Brazil strongly supports a resumption of the Black Sea Grain Initiative under terms that would be acceptable to all concerned parties. Brazil also underscores the need for addressing the root causes of food and energy insecurity, such as excessively high interest rates and external debt that severely impact prices and limit the ability of developing countries to

invest in sustainable food and energy production. The current international financial structure is not well equipped to assist those countries in addressing their major challenges. As recently announced by President Lula da Silva, during our Group of 20 presidency, Brazil will launch a global alliance against hunger, which is a top priority for Brazil and should be for us all.

It is worrisome that we are witnessing a conflict with such geopolitical reverberations well into the twenty-first century. We must reverse this course. Brazil, along with many others, continue to call for the deceleration of hostilities, the resumption of dialogue and a peaceful solution to the conflict — an obligation of all Member States, under Article 33 of the United Nations Charter. There is no military solution to this conflict. Only a political solution that takes into account the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the legitimate security concerns of all parties will bring lasting peace. The international community will have to assist the parties to come to a negotiated and lasting solution.

Brazil is prepared to do its part. The space for diplomacy and peaceful solution is narrowing. We must set aside practices that only deepen divisions instead of contributing to a more peaceful world and work together for renewed multilateralism, Brazil firmly advocates for mediation and preventive diplomacy as indispensable tools to prevent the escalation of crisis. To that end, Brazil has been engaged in several forums with a view to dealing with the Ukrainian crisis. We have sent High Representatives to Copenhagen and Jeddah. We have also spoken bilaterally to the concerned parties.

We strongly encourage that in these conversations, both parties be heard and their views carefully taken into consideration. Talking to only one party or the other will not help advance the cause of durable peace. A comprehensive approach, as proposed, will be the only way forward to enable peaceful negotiations. With that in mind, during our presidency of the Security Council next month, we will organize a high-level open debate on the contributions of regional, subregional and bilateral arrangements to the prevention and peaceful resolution of disputes. I am counting on everyone's participation in October.

The President: I now call on the Minister of Climate Change and Environment and Chief of the International Affairs Office at the Presidential Court of the United Arab Emirates.

Ms. Almheiri (United Arab Emirates): I extend my gratitude to Secretary-General Guterres for his valuable briefing and wish to acknowledge the Heads of State and Government and other high-level representatives present today. I also welcome the participation of President Zelenskyy. I commend Albania for convening this critical open debate. The United Arab Emirates has long advocated for a peaceful resolution to the war in Ukraine that upholds the Charter of the United Nations.

The war has wrought a devastating toll on human life, including the displacement of almost two out of every three children in Ukraine. The country now bears the grim record for the highest concentration of landmines in the world, rendering nearly one third of the country no longer safe due to unexploded ordnance. The conflict has further ravaged food and transport infrastructure. We stress once again the need for all the parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and, specifically, the protection of those objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population. We are deeply concerned about the ramifications of the destruction of infrastructure on survivor services, health care and other critical forms of support, especially on women and children, who already bear the brunt of the armed conflict.

The United Arab Emirates has pledged \$100 million to help address the humanitarian crisis. We have sent 11 airlifts of relief and medical supplies for children and the elderly, provided more than 2,500 generators and sent 23 ambulances just this week. My country has also provided \$4 million in funding for First Lady Olena Zelenska's foundation's programming for orphans.

Beyond Ukraine, the war's global ripple effects are evident, especially in terms of the pronounced impact on food security, including in our own region. Let me restate that the United Arab Emirates remains steadfast in supporting the renewal of the Black Sea Grain Initiative and the full implementation of the memorandum of understanding on Russian fertilizers and food products, as well as any discussions that support those goals.

While crucial, those measures only alleviate the suffering rather than end it. World leaders, especially this week in the General Assembly, have made clear the global desire for a just and sustainable peace in Ukraine — one that upholds the United Nations Charter. A diverse set of countries is increasingly coming together around the common cause of peace in Ukraine.

We welcome the role played in that regard by countries such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and China, as well as the African peace initiative, in supporting all possible routes to a peaceful settlement. In those calls for peace, there is a growing recognition of the urgency of that task, not just for Ukraine but for all of us.

The war has amplified the erosion of faith in multilateralism, but achieving peace can begin its restoration. Of course, peace will only come out of diplomatic talks between Russia and Ukraine, and it will only be just and sustainable if it upholds the Charter. The Security Council and its members have a vital role to play in that process. We can encourage and incentivize de-escalation, extend the urgency to uphold the Charter on every file before us and expand the circle of peacemakers to reflect today's global realities. We would welcome an increasingly representative Council and believe that the discussions on reforming it should move forward with serious intention.

Although the path to peace in Ukraine may be arduous, that does not license inaction. There is only one sustainable path to a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, in line with the Charter, and to preserving the country's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. The United Arab Emirates stands ready to support that objective.

Mr. Zhaoxu Ma (China) (*speak in Chinese*): China's position on the Ukraine issue is consistent and clear. President Xi Jinping put forward four points on what must be done, four things the international community must do together and three observations in that regard. They have become the fundamental guidelines for China to deal with the Ukraine issue. We believe that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be respected, the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations should be observed, the legitimate security concerns of all countries should be taken seriously and all efforts conducive to resolving the crisis should be supported.

In February, China issued its position on the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis, laying out 12 proposals, including respect for sovereignty, ceasing the hostilities, resuming talks and ending unilateral sanctions. The core message of the proposals is to facilitate peace talks. China maintains close communication on the Ukraine crisis with the various relevant parties and the rest of the international community. The Special Representative of the Chinese Government on Eurasian

Affairs has visited the countries concerned and attended the international conference on Ukraine in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. China has facilitated talks for peace in its own way and played a positive and constructive role in resolving the Ukraine crisis.

The Ukraine crisis continues to drag on. The intense situation on the battlefield and the accumulating risks of a spillover have had a significant impact on the international situation. The Ukraine crisis has become what it is today for a variety of deep and complex reasons. A prolonged and expanded crisis is not in the interest of any party. In the light of the current situation, I would like to stress the following four points.

First, we need to stay committed to facilitating peace talks. History has proven that conflicts have no winners and that war cannot solve problems. The pursuit of one's absolute security or efforts to stoke bloc confrontation will only intensify disagreements and conflict and will come to no good. No matter how complex the situation or how challenging the task is, we must adhere to the general direction of a political settlement and encourage the parties concerned to build consensus, initiate peace talks and cease the hostilities at an early date. The international community needs to create the conditions and atmosphere necessary for that. The relevant parties should take a long-term view, uphold the concept of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, respect each other's legitimate security concerns and promote the building of a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture in Europe.

Secondly, we need to refrain from pouring fuel on the fire. All the parties should exercise restraint, refrain from exacerbating tensions or taking any measures that would escalate the situation and work to create the conditions necessary for a political settlement. We must safeguard the bottom line of nuclear security and prevent manmade nuclear accidents.

Thirdly, we need to manage the spillover risks. The Ukraine crisis has dealt a heavy blow to economic recovery and global development and severely affected global food, energy and financial security. Developing countries are the first to bear the brunt of that. The relevant countries should stop abusing unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction and protect the security and smooth operation of global production and supply chains. We support the relevant parties in maintaining communication with Russia and Ukraine

on the Black Sea Grain Initiative and resuming the deal on the basis of balanced consideration of the concerns of both sides with a view to effectively protecting global food security.

Fourthly, we need to ease the humanitarian crisis. In 2023, as many as 339 million people around the world are in need of humanitarian aid — some 70 million more than at the beginning of 2022. The Ukraine crisis has produced millions of displaced people and destroyed much important large-scale infrastructure. The parties to the conflict should strictly observe international humanitarian law, follow the principles of necessity, distinction and proportionality, protect civilians and civilian infrastructure and provide rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access in order to reduce the suffering of civilians. The international community and humanitarian institutions should honour the principles of humanitarian aid and intensify efforts to help those affected overcome difficulties.

China attaches great importance to the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. At the beginning of the crisis, we put forward a six-point initiative to prevent a massive humanitarian crisis and have continually played a constructive role in easing the humanitarian situation. We have provided multiple batches of humanitarian supplies to Ukraine.

China will remain committed to true multilateralism and to our objective and just position. We will always stand on the side of dialogue and peace and on the right side of history. We are ready to work with Security Council members and relevant parties to continue playing a constructive role to find a political solution to the crisis in Ukraine.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): I wish to thank the Albanian presidency for convening today's briefing. We also wish to express our deep gratitude to the Secretary-General for his invaluable insights.

It is not redundant that we remind ourselves of the importance of multilateralism in fostering cooperation, partnership and interaction among States, based on a shared system of norms and values. Multilateralism also involves consultation, dialogue, inclusion, respect and solidarity and is guided by collectively developed rules that ensure sustainable and effective cooperation.

More significantly, the importance of multilateralism lies in its ability to enable us, sovereign States, to collectively solve complex challenges that

could not be overcome individually. By nurturing peace before, during and after conflicts, multilateralism contributes to sustainable and lasting peace. It is in that regard that the Security Council must play its crucial role in maintaining international peace and security by facilitating political processes, protecting civilians, preventing wars, promoting human rights and restoring the rule of law.

The protracted conflict between Russia and Ukraine constitutes a grave risk to the maintenance of global peace and security. That, in essence, perfectly illustrates the struggles multilateralism faces. Despite numerous international appeals, including from the Council, we are now entering the 574th day of hostilities, with mounting civilian casualties and no clear end in sight. It is indeed a twenty-first century tragedy unfolding under our collective gaze and the scrutiny of the entire world. The conflict unfolds both on the battlefield and amid a perplexed and divided public opinion, pushing our contemporary multilateral system to its breaking point.

As we all can attest, despite its imperfections, our multilateral system has weathered numerous crises. The ongoing crisis poses a serious threat to the foundational principles of global stability. Not only has the conflict caused immense suffering for Ukraine and its people, but it has also compounded global food security issues, pushing more individuals into poverty and destabilizing regions far from the conflict's epicentre. Moreover, the conflict impedes our joint efforts to reach vital multilateral milestones, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, which are a focal topic of this year's General Assembly, and jeopardizes our collective efforts towards non-proliferation.

Of particular concern to Mozambique is the intensification of military rhetoric and the possibility of further escalation. It is evident that the parties involved continue to prioritize military strategies over dialogue and compromise, increasing the risk of severe miscalculations. We maintain that there can be no purely military resolution to the crisis. Should one be pursued, it will weigh heavily on the Council's conscience for generations to come.

We remain unyielding in our advocacy for a political and negotiated end to the conflict. We once again urge all parties to silence the guns and engage in earnest and diplomatic efforts, aimed at a swift resumption of direct negotiations. A lasting peace, consistent with

the Charter of the United Nations, remains the sole viable solution.

The President: I now give the floor to the Chancellor of Germany.

Mr. Scholz (Germany): It has been almost 19 months since Russia started a brutal war of aggression against its sovereign neighbour, Ukraine. Tens of thousands of soldiers and Ukrainian civilians have been killed. Countless Ukrainian children have been abducted. Russian troops have murdered, raped and tortured. They raze towns and villages to the ground. They lay mines across entire regions, turning cornfields into death traps.

The war is taking place in Europe, but its repercussions are felt throughout the world. Russia has deliberately removed millions of tons of grain and fertilizer from the world market, which countries around the globe need to guarantee food security. Russia is deliberately targeting grain silos and port infrastructure. Russia has withdrawn unilaterally from the Black Sea Grain Initiative, triggering more poverty and food insecurity all over the world. There is no justification for that.

Any claims that sanctions are hampering Russian exports of crops and fertilizer are false. There are no sanctions impeding such exports. On the contrary, Russia dominates the global fertilizer market, and 2022 was a record year for Russian wheat exports. The reason for the continued suffering in Ukraine and around the world is shockingly simple — Russia's President wants to follow through with his imperialistic plan to conquer his sovereign neighbour, Ukraine.

The United Nations has expressed very clearly what it thinks of Russia's war of aggression, most recently on 23 February of this year. The General Assembly called for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. That demand is directed at Russia. It remains unanswered. Nothing rings out louder today than Russia's silence in response to that global call for peace.

Some argue that the war could have been prevented by diplomatic means. In fact, France and Germany have held hundreds of meetings with Moscow and Kyiv since the beginning of Russia's attack on eastern Ukraine in 2014. Our aim was to find a diplomatic solution that is in line with international law. All those endeavours failed because one party, Russia, chose war over diplomacy, but there has been no lack of diplomatic efforts.

Some call for an immediate ceasefire. I acknowledge their good intentions. We all want an end to the killing, today rather than tomorrow. And yet we must be wary of seemingly easy solutions that promise peace in name only. Peace without freedom is oppression, and peace without justice is a diktat. In the resolutions of the General Assembly, we have laid out the path towards peace. Peace means respecting the Charter of the United Nations. Peace means respecting the territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine. That is the promise the United Nations Charter gives to every Member State of the United Nations.

No one longs for peace more than the Ukrainians. The peace plan that the Ukrainian President has laid out is proof of that. The recent meetings in Copenhagen and Jeddah were important. That work should be continued. It should be continued in the pursuit of one

goal — finding peace that respects the principles of the United Nations Charter. The more decisively we rally behind those principles, the more determined we are in pushing for a just peace and the more united we are in our rejection of Russian aggression, the sooner the war will end, and the sooner human suffering will end in Ukraine and around the world. That goal is worth our utmost efforts.

The President: There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. Given the lateness of the hour, I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3.30 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 2 p.m.