



Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

Provisional

9602

nd meeting

Sunday, 14 April 2024, 4 p.m.

New York

President: Mrs. Frazier (Malta)

Members:

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Algeria | Mr. Gaouaoui |
| China | Mr. Dai Bing |
| Ecuador | Mr. De La Gasca |
| France | Mrs. Broadhurst Estival |
| Guyana | Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett |
| Japan | Mr. Yamazaki |
| Mozambique | Mr. Fernandes |
| Republic of Korea | Mr. Sangjin Kim |
| Russian Federation | Mr. Nebenzia |
| Sierra Leone | Mr. Kanu |
| Slovenia | Mr. Žbogar |
| Switzerland | Mrs. Baeriswyl |
| United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . | Dame Barbara Woodward |
| United States of America | Mr. Wood |

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room AB-0928 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



The meeting was called to order at 4 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

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

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

I warmly welcome His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres, to whom I now give the floor.

The Secretary-General: The Middle East is on the brink. The people of the region are confronting a real danger of a devastating full-scale conflict. Now is the time to defuse and de-escalate. Now is the time for maximum restraint.

This emergency meeting has been convened upon an urgent request by the Permanent Representative of Israel, who noted in his letter dated 13 April 2024 addressed to the President of the Security Council that Iran had launched

“a direct attack from within its territory of more than 200 unmanned aerial vehicles, cruise missiles and ballistic missiles towards Israel in clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law”. (S/2024/304)

Yesterday the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran also addressed a letter to the President of the Security Council, stating that

“in the late hours of 13 April 2024, the Islamic Republic of Iran carried out a series of military strikes on Israeli military objectives.” (S/2024/305)

He stated that the action was taken

“in the exercise of Iran's inherent right to self-defence as outlined in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, and in response to the Israeli recurring military aggressions, particularly its armed attack on 1 April 2024 against Iranian diplomatic premises” (*ibid.*).

According to the latest reports, Iran launched hundreds of drones and missiles from its territory towards Israel, with most intercepted. Several missiles reportedly struck within Israeli territory, one of which damaged an Israeli military facility in the south of the country. Overall, a few civilians were injured.

When the nature of the attack became clear, I stated the following last night:

“I strongly condemn the serious escalation represented by the large-scale attack launched on Israel by Iran this evening. I call for an immediate cessation of these hostilities.” (SG/SM/22186)

I remind all Member States that the Charter of the United Nations prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations. Furthermore, the principle of the inviolability of diplomatic and consular premises and personnel must be respected in all cases in accordance with international law, as I stated when condemning the 1 April attack on the Iranian consulate in Damascus.

It is time to step back from the brink. It is vital to avoid any action that could lead to major military confrontations on multiple fronts in the Middle East. Civilians are already bearing the brunt and paying the highest price. We have a shared responsibility to actively engage all parties concerned to prevent further escalation. As the Declaration on Friendly Relations of 1970 states, acts of reprisal involving the use of force are barred under international law. We have a shared responsibility to secure an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid. We have a shared responsibility to stop violence in the occupied West Bank, de-escalate the situation along the Blue Line and re-establish safe navigation in the Red Sea. We have a shared responsibility to work for peace. Regional — and indeed global — peace and security are being undermined by the hour. Neither the region nor the world can afford more war.

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

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

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing and

acknowledge the participation of the Permanent Representatives of Iran, Syria and Israel in today's meeting.

Guyana is alarmed over the recent escalation of tensions between Israel and Iran, especially in a region that is already experiencing intense conflicts. We urge the parties to exercise maximum restraint, to desist from launching further retaliatory attacks and to seek the path of peace. Any further attacks will have devastating consequences for the whole region and for the wider international community. The world cannot afford another war, and the Middle East certainly cannot afford another war.

The attack on Iran's diplomatic facility in Damascus earlier this month and Iran's attacks on Israel yesterday have only served to heighten tensions in the region. We urge the parties to abide strictly with their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and to avoid a larger conflagration.

As with any conflict, it is always innocent civilians who bear the brunt, with women and children suffering disproportionately. We are seeing, for example, how civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory and other parts of the region are already reeling from unprecedented levels of suffering as a result of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Guyana further calls on countries of the region to fully comply with their international obligations and to uphold the principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. We also demand full adherence to international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, and that the parties settle their differences through peaceful and lawful means.

Violence begets violence and compromises peace and security. Guyana reiterates its call on all parties to choose the path of peace and dialogue.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting. I also thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, for his important briefing on the latest gravely concerning development in the Middle East.

Sierra Leone would like to refer to a letter dated 13 April 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2024/304) confirming a request to "convene a meeting of the Security Council immediately", and a letter dated 13 April 2024 from the

Permanent Representative of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General (S/2024/305).

The letter contained in document S/2024/304 notes that:

"Iran ... launched a direct attack from within its territory of more than 200 uncrewed aerial vehicles, cruise missiles and ballistic missiles towards Israel in clear violation of the Charter of the United and international law."

The letter contained in document S/2024/305 notes that:

"in the late hours of 13 April 2024, the Islamic Republic of Iran carried out a series of military strikes on Israeli military objectives."

In addition to the Secretary-General's briefing to the Security Council in this meeting, we take note of his timely statement regarding the attacks by the Islamic Republic of Iran targeting Israel, in which he "strongly condemn[s] the serious escalation represented by the large-scale attack launched on Israel by the Islamic Republic of Iran" (see SG/SM/22186) and called for an immediate cessation of those hostilities. Regrettably, the Middle East region is once again at a dangerous crossroads. The escalating tension in the Middle East is dangerous and unprecedented, with the potential to not only destabilize the entire region, but impact global peace and security.

Less than two weeks ago, in the Council (see S/PV.9593), Sierra Leone strongly condemned the use of force, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and relevant international law, including with regard to the development and conduct of friendly relations, diplomatic and consular protections, as well as conduct in the region that may lead to an escalation or exacerbate tensions in the already volatile situation. In a similar way, Sierra Leone strongly condemns claimed reprisal attacks not in conformity with international law and the United Nations Charter.

With the Middle East at a knife's edge and at the precipice of a dangerous escalation, either by an intentional calculus or accidentally, with equally grave global ramifications, the path to peace is certainly not tit-for-tat military attacks, but rather de-escalation and diplomatic engagement. To that end, we call on both parties and all other involved parties, to exercise maximum restraint and resist the urge to resort further to the use of force.

We call on the parties to the conflict and all other involved parties to be mindful of their obligations under international law and the United Nations Charter and to comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions. The parties are unequivocally obligated to comply with their international law obligations and the United Nations Charter principles and provisions, in good faith, in particular, the imperative for the peaceful resolution of disputes and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of each State.

In urging de-escalation, Sierra Leone is also mindful of the ongoing hostilities in the Gaza Strip and further imperative for the full implementation of resolutions 2712 (2023), 2720 (2023) and 2728 (2024). The United Nations must not retreat from its important purpose and role in confronting the consequential challenges of our times. The Security Council must continue to play its part, as envisaged by the United Nations Charter.

Further, Sierra Leone expresses full support for the Secretary-General and his envoys and representatives to use the good offices of our Organization to lead efforts in ensuring de-escalation. All involved parties must move onto the path of peace, peaceful coexistence and good neighbourliness through negotiations. States with influence over the parties are called upon to leverage such influence in the interest of de-escalation and peace. Let us choose peace, security and stability over war.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I want to thank the Secretary-General for joining us and for sharing with us his assessment of the situation. I also want to welcome the presence of the representatives of Israel, Iran and Syria in today's meeting.

I would like to start by expressing our deepest concern about the recent developments in the Middle East. We strongly condemn the large-scale attack on Israel launched by the Islamic Republic of Iran yesterday. We resolutely deplore this serious escalation, as we did the attack on the Iranian consulate last week (see S/PV.9593). The sequence of these events threatens to accelerate the spiral of violence, escalating into a broader conflict of unpredictable scope. It is crucial for all involved parties to recognize the severity of the situation and immediately cease hostilities.

We call on all countries to respect and act in accordance with international law. We once again underline that the same standards apply to all Member

States and that all of us have the obligation to uphold the Charter of the United Nations.

First, let me underline our concern about the regional escalation and its spillover effects. We share the concerns of the Secretary-General that the danger of a devastating region-wide escalation is present. It is imperative that every action taken by the involved parties be measured and deliberate so as to avoid further escalation, since any miscalculation can lead us to the point of no return. The situation is highly alarming, deeply worrisome and extremely volatile.

Secondly, Slovenia has consistently called for de-escalation and restraint. Today we repeat our call to all actors in the region to show maximum restraint. We call on countries with influence on State and non-State actors to exert that influence and prevent the worst from happening. We urge everyone to choose the path of dialogue and diplomacy and refrain from further retaliations. We therefore welcome today's meeting as a step towards de-escalation and a peaceful settlement of the dispute.

Thirdly, we have been witnessing the significant impact of the devastating situation in Gaza on the region, including along the Blue Line, in the Red Sea and elsewhere. It is our collective responsibility to take immediate action. By adopting resolution 2728 (2024), we took a step forward in addressing the crisis. However, our failure to ensure its full implementation represents a critical setback. Slovenia continues to believe that a ceasefire in Gaza would have a calming effect on tensions in the region. Every moment we delay, the risk of a broader conflict increases.

In these chaotic times, another major military confrontation in the Middle East could lead to devastating consequences for the region and the world. Placing the interests of the people in the region and international peace and security first, Slovenia calls for restraint by all actors and a return to diplomacy. As a Security Council member, we are ready to fully engage in a comprehensive response to the crisis in the region.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank you, Madam President, for bringing us here today, and I thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing.

The United States condemns, in the strongest terms, the unprecedented attack on the State of Israel by the Islamic Republic of Iran and its militant proxies and partners. Iran's intent was to cause significant damage

and death in Israel. It launched over 300 munitions, including more than 100 ballistic missiles and land-attack cruise missiles, as well as explosive uncrewed aerial vehicles, at Israel. Iran's reckless actions posed a threat to populations — not only in Israel, but also in other United Nations Member States in the region, including Jordan and Iraq. The Security Council has an obligation not to let Iran's actions go unanswered. Indeed, Iran has flagrantly violated its international legal obligations for far too long, notably through the actions of its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, by arming Hizbullah, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006), and by arming, facilitating and enabling Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and more recently on merchant and commercial shipping in the Red Sea, in clear violation of resolution 2216 (2015) and in defiance of resolution 2722 (2024).

Of course, Iran transferred Shahed one-way attack drones to Russia — the same drones it used in last night's attacks on Israel — at a time when such transfers were in clear violation of resolution 2231 (2015). In recent years, Iran has also repeatedly violated international law by targeting commercial ships with mines and seizing them in international waters of the Persian Gulf and surrounding waterways, just as it did on 12 April when it seized a Portuguese-flagged ship near the Strait of Hormuz. Iran is still detaining both the ship and its crew, whose members are citizens of five countries, including Russia. In a broad sense, Iran was also complicit in the 7 October attack on Israel, because it has provided significant funding and training for the military wing of Hamas. That Iranian support contributed to the current crisis in Gaza.

Those and other reckless Iranian acts are not inherently defensive actions against other Member States. Given the threats that Iran's aggressive actions pose to international peace and security, we have a collective responsibility, as members of the Security Council, to ensure that Iran complies with the Council's resolutions and ceases its violations of the Charter of the United Nations. In the coming days, and in consultation with other Member States, the United States will explore additional measures in order to hold Iran accountable here at the United Nations. More immediately, the Security Council must unequivocally condemn Iran's aggressive actions and call for Iran and its partners and proxies to cease their attacks. The United States also supports Israel's exercise of its

inherent right to defend itself in the face of that attack, and as President Biden has said, we will remain in close contact with Israel's leaders.

Let me make it clear that if Iran or its proxies take action against the United States or further action against Israel, Iran will be held responsible. We note the warning in the Secretary-General's statement that the region is at risk of plunging into a deeper and wider war on multiple fronts. The United States is not seeking escalation. Our actions have been purely defensive in nature. The best way to prevent such escalation is an unambiguous condemnation by the Council of Iran's unprecedented large-scale attack, and an unequivocal call to Iran and its proxies and partners to refrain from further violence. Our goal is to de-escalate and then get back to the issue at hand — securing an end to the conflict in Gaza by getting a ceasefire in Gaza through a hostage deal, as well as ensuring a surge in humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians in need.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing, and I welcome the presence here today of the Permanent Representatives of Iran, Israel and Syria.

The attacks carried out yesterday by Iran constitute a grave threat to international peace and security and the long-sought-after stability of the region. My Government has strongly condemned the attack on Israel and has called for avoiding an escalation of the conflict, which could have unforeseeable consequences, including a conflagration that could affect all humankind. Ecuador joins the calls expressed by many for reducing the tensions and avoiding the threats that are keeping the civilian population in a state of extreme insecurity and anxiety.

In conclusion, I want to appeal for the greatest possible restraint and for prioritizing diplomatic and political instruments for resolving the conflict. I also urge everyone to accept the support of the United Nations, regional bodies and countries or groups of countries in good faith, with a view to ending the alarming situation that, as Secretary-General Guterres has said, could lead to a large-scale military confrontation in the Middle East.

Mr. Gaouaoui (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his thorough briefing.

The Security Council is meeting today in the wake of yesterday's developments in the Middle East. They represent a dangerous escalation that could leave the region and the world in an even more dangerous situation, in which matters could get out of control with unpredictable consequences. Algeria is following those developments with deep concern and interest, and we warn everyone that if the cycle of conflict in the Middle East expands those consequences could be very grave. We therefore call on all the parties to show self-restraint and avoid escalation.

We also want to echo the words of the Secretary-General when he said that "neither the region nor the world can afford more war". At the Council meeting (see S/PV.9593) held to consider the attacks launched by the Israeli occupation forces on the Iranian Embassy building in Damascus at the beginning of this month, we warned of the possible consequences if the arrogant behaviour of the Israeli occupation in the region is not stopped, and we emphasized that its dangerous act could drag the entire region into the conflict. Today it is clear today that our anticipation was correct and our warning well-founded.

The Middle East is at a critical juncture that makes it incumbent on all international actors to prioritize the voice of wisdom so that we can all find safe harbour together. We emphasize that there can be no international peace and security unless we all uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and abide by international law. Applying double standards and manipulating international law to suit the interests and desires of a few would undermine our international order, based on the rule of law. Today we are at a crossroads. Either we fully embrace international law, without manipulating it or using threats, or we risk falling into chaos and instability.

The crises in the Middle East are organically interconnected. We cannot consider some of them without considering all of the others. It is therefore crucial to address the root cause of those crises, which is the Israeli occupation. The most recent developments cannot supersede the central issue, which is the aggression against the unarmed Palestinian people in Gaza. Nor can those developments be used as a pretext or cover for launching a ground attack on Rafah. We reiterate that we must reject the possibility of any attack on Rafah, because the ramifications for the security and stability of the region would be catastrophic. We stress that de-escalation in the Middle East in the short term

definitely requires a ceasefire in Gaza and an end to the heinous killing machine and the collective punishment of the Palestinian people.

Sustainable peace and security in the region will be possible only when the Palestinian people can exercise their legitimate and inalienable rights and when Israel ends its occupation of all Arab territories. In that regard, the Security Council must face up to its responsibility to maintain international peace and security and prevent any further deterioration, by imposing an immediate and lasting ceasefire in Gaza, working seriously to establish an independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, and putting an end to Israel's occupation of Arab territories.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): I too thank the Secretary-General for his timely briefing on this urgent matter. We are now witnessing an extremely dangerous situation that could have catastrophic consequences for the region and the whole world.

Japan is deeply concerned about Iran's attack on Israel with numerous drones and missiles, which put a huge population in real danger and could further aggravate the current turmoil in the Middle East, and we strongly condemn that escalation. We are seriously concerned about the possibility that this large-scale military action could increase the already extremely heightened tensions in the Middle East and lead to a wider and more serious regional confrontation, with global security and economic ramifications. It is imperative that the Security Council address the matter as a united body responsible for international peace and security, in order to contain the risk that the region could be plunged into the abyss. Japan has been strongly urging the parties concerned to calm down, de-escalate the situation and exercise maximum restraint, as the Secretary-General just mentioned. We reiterate our determination to continue making all possible diplomatic efforts to prevent further deterioration. We must end this vicious cycle of violence at this critical historic juncture.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

France condemns in the strongest terms Iran's unprecedented attack on Israel yesterday, which threatens to destabilize the region. The Secretary-General has also condemned it. The attack constitutes a serious and major threat to international peace and security and the stability and security of the region.

Through its decision to take such unprecedented action, Iran's destabilizing efforts have reached a new level, and it is risking a military escalation for which it would be responsible. We call on Iran and its allies to finally cease their destabilizing action throughout the region without delay. France expresses its solidarity with the Israeli people and reiterates its commitment to the security of Israel and our partners and to stability in the region. We welcome the very fortunate fact that Israel was able to successfully repel the attack, thereby avoiding the worst and sparing many civilians.

France is working on de-escalation with its partners in the region and calls for restraint. President Emmanuel Macron and France's Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Stéphane Séjourné, are working to that end. France is fully engaged in working to find a way out of the crises in the Near and Middle East, de-escalate tensions and uphold the principles that underpin our international order. In Lebanon, we have made proposals to both parties with a view to achieving a cessation of hostilities through dialogue. In Gaza, we are working to achieve the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages and an immediate and lasting ceasefire. Six months after the terrorist attacks of 7 October and the start of the war in Gaza, it is high time to lay the foundations for a lasting political resolution of the crisis by addressing the causes of the conflict. That is what the draft resolution that we have submitted to the Security Council proposes, and we call on all members to support it. We must do everything we can to avoid another war in the Middle East.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I thank the Secretary-General for briefing us today.

The United Kingdom unequivocally condemns Iran's reckless attack on Israel, which risked thousands of civilian casualties. The scale and nature of the heinous assault — the first direct attack from Iran on Israeli soil — poses grave risks to the security and stability of citizens across the Middle East. The United Kingdom has long made it clear that Iran has played an unacceptable role in destabilizing the region and also bears responsibility for the actions of the groups that it has supported militarily, financially and politically over many years. Through this attack, Iran has once again demonstrated that it is intent on sowing chaos in the region.

As we have shown, the United Kingdom will continue to stand up for the security of Israel and of all our partners in the region, including Jordan and Iraq.

We welcome our allies' actions aimed at deterring the Iranian threat. No one wants to see further bloodshed. The United Kingdom will also continue to work urgently alongside the international community to stabilize the situation and prevent further escalation. It is vital that all the parties exercise maximum restraint and refrain from any action that could heighten tensions in the region. We also call on Iran to release the *MSC Aries* and its crew unconditionally and without delay.

Iran's actions do nothing to advance the prospects for peace in Israel and Gaza. In accordance with resolution 2728 (2024), the United Kingdom remains resolved to work with international partners to secure an immediate pause in the fighting in Gaza in order to get aid in and hostages out, leading to a sustainable ceasefire without a return to destruction, fighting and the loss of life.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): We thank Malta's presidency for convening today's urgent meeting, and we highly value the insights provided by Secretary-General António Guterres on the crisis.

Almost two weeks ago (see S/PV.9593), when we were discussing the Israeli air strike on the Iranian diplomatic mission in Damascus, we raised serious concerns about the possibility that the incident could escalate regional tensions and potentially lead to retaliation, heightening the conflict between Israel and Iran. Regrettably, our concerns have proved correct. Yesterday we witnessed a series of military strikes on Israeli soil carried out by the Islamic Republic of Iran, invoking the principle of self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. We are deeply concerned about yesterday's Iranian strikes. A tit-for-tat cycle of mutual aggression is not consistent with a logic of peace and peaceful coexistence between States. It leads to more deaths, suffering and misery. It will further exacerbate the tensions prevailing in the region and may trigger more conflicts, potentially involving other countries, with unthinkable implications. We strongly believe that it is crucial for all the parties involved to exercise restraint and approach the situation with prudence and wisdom. Careful consideration of the risks and the extended consequences is therefore essential at this critical moment.

In the light of the current situation, it is imperative that all parties involved — Israel and Iran in particular — strictly abide by the Charter, which compels all Member States to refrain from the threat or

use of force in their international relations. Stability in the Middle East is vital to the security and development of the region and beyond. It is essential that States in the region and their allies pursue policies that promote peace and stability, with due regard for a balance of interests. To that end, we, as Security Council members, individually and collectively, must actively engage with all the parties concerned to prevent any miscalculations that could lead to broader conflict in an already volatile region. Such an escalation would have devastating consequences for the civilians who are already suffering in Syria, Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian territory, Israel and the broader region. We urge everyone to strive for peace, understanding and cooperation in the Middle East. Acknowledging the legitimate concerns of all the parties involved is a crucial step towards fostering stability and harmony in diversity. And let us remind ourselves that the central issue in the Middle East is the materialization of a two-State solution, whereby Israel and Palestine can live together, side by side in peace and security as two independent and sovereign States.

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): I thank Secretary-General Guterres for his important briefing on the grave situation in the Middle East, including yesterday's attack by Iran against Israel.

The Republic of Korea is gravely concerned about the current situation in the Middle East, exemplified by yesterday's attacks by Iran against Israel using numerous drones and missiles. The Republic of Korea condemns those large-scale attacks, which are not in compliance with international law. To make the situation worse, freedom of navigation is now being threatened not only in the Red Sea, but also in the Strait of Hormuz. Such threats cannot be justified, regardless of the excuse.

Since the outbreak of the horrendous terrorist attacks by Hamas against Israeli citizens on 7 October 2023, the subsequent military operations by Israel in Gaza and the ensuing humanitarian catastrophe, the international community, including the Republic of Korea, has repeatedly warned of the possibility of an increasingly dangerous spillover in the Middle East. Earlier this month, when we witnessed the incident at the Iranian consulate that resulted in casualties in Damascus, the Republic of Korea expressed its deep concern that additional violent incidents could escalate into new tragedies in the region. Unfortunately, we are now seeing this even more dangerous tension surging in the Middle East.

Amidst the worst escalation in the Middle East, as the entire region stands at risk of being engulfed in the flames of war, what is crucial is finding the most effective solution to ease the tension, rather than finger-pointing and debating who and what triggered the current situation. Thus, the Security Council should gather the wisdom of all its members.

We can still step back from the brink. The ongoing escalation of the already dire tension in the region should immediately stop. Any regional escalation should be condemned, and regional actors should exercise full restraint in order to prevent any additional spillover. We therefore take note of the fact that the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed, in his letter (S/2024/305) to the Secretary-General yesterday, the position that Iran does not seek escalation or conflict in the region, and we hope that that affirmation can be realized with actual compliance.

The Republic of Korea is monitoring the situation with deep concern and once again calls on all parties to exercise restraint in order to prevent the situation from escalating further. Let me conclude by once again reiterating what Secretary-General Guterres pointed out yesterday in his statement and today in his briefing: neither the region nor the world can afford another military confrontation. Immediate de-escalation is, as everybody understands, an urgent collective need at this critical juncture.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): We welcome the swift convening of this meeting of the Security Council, and we thank Secretary-General Guterres for his statement, in which he details the most recent events and underscores our shared responsibility.

Switzerland firmly condemns the coordinated attacks by Iran on targets in Israel last night and this morning. Those attacks are part of a spiral of violence that had already been dangerously set in motion in the region, as we also saw with the air strike against the consulate of Iran in Damascus on 1 April — an attack that Switzerland also condemned. Each of those attacks increases the risk of further escalation in the region.

We also note with concern the seizure of a Portuguese-flagged ship, the *MSC Aries*, by the Iranian armed forces in the Strait of Hormuz. We have repeatedly warned against the risk of accelerating the spiral of violence in the region. It is imperative that all parties in the region and those with influence over them

exercise the utmost restraint in order to avoid further endangering the people of the region. We call on all parties to armed conflict to respect their obligations to protect civilian populations and infrastructure.

We once again reiterate our plea: the spiral of escalation must stop immediately. The region must not be plunged into an even wider and deadlier conflict, at a time when we are facing a catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza, and when tensions and exchanges of fire at the Blue Line between southern Lebanon and Israel are at an all-time high. We call for full respect and support for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and other United Nations missions in the region.

De-escalation must be our highest priority. That includes the implementation of resolution 2728 (2024). An immediate ceasefire in Gaza is urgent, as is the cessation of attacks by armed groups in the region. We take note of the declaration by the Iranian authorities that they do not wish to continue their operation. We recall, in that context, that any recourse to the use of force must be in strict conformity with the Charter and that international humanitarian law must be respected by all parties. In such situations, dialogue is essential. The Council and all States must fully play their part in facilitating de-escalation. To that end, Switzerland is ready to make its contribution.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have listened carefully to the statement made by the Secretary-General. We also noted the Secretary-General's immediate public reaction condemning Iran's actions yesterday. It is regrettable that, unlike in today's meeting, the Secretary-General did not propose to brief the Council on 2 April, when, at the initiative of Russia, an urgent briefing was called to discuss the aforementioned Israeli strike against the Iranian consular premises in Damascus (see S/PV.9593). We would also like to see greater activity on the Secretary-General's part to convey to Council members information on other matters that are no less turbulent for the entire Middle East region, such as the now-regular attacks by Israel on its neighbours Syria and Lebanon. If such actions continue to go unnoticed, the Secretary-General's calls for restraint by all parties, which we share, may prove futile.

When we met in this Chamber on 2 April to discuss the strike by Israel on the consular premises of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Damascus, we warned that

what was needed was a strong unified signal from the Council that such actions are unacceptable — not only against the sovereign States of Iran or Syria, and not only in the Middle East, but anywhere in the world. We called on our Security Council colleagues to condemn such reckless steps clearly and unequivocally so that they would not be repeated. We also warned that otherwise, the risks that such acts might recur and that the situation in the region might expand would increase manyfold. We even proposed a draft Security Council press statement consisting of depoliticized language standard for such cases.

What did we hear at that time from Western delegations? We heard that everything was not clear and obvious, and that it was necessary to assess and see whether such a signal from the Council would help to stabilize the situation in the region. The United States, the United Kingdom and France essentially declined to confirm that the basic principles of international law regarding the inviolability of diplomatic and consular facilities — principles enshrined in the relevant Vienna Conventions — apply equally to all States. The outcome is now clear for all to see.

The Council knows very well that an attack on a diplomatic mission is considered a *casus belli* under international law. And if a Western mission had been hit, those countries would immediately retaliate and then argue in this very Chamber that they were right to do so. And that is because, for them, everything that concerns Western missions and Western citizens is sacred and must be protected. But when it comes to other States, their citizens and their rights, including the right to self-defence, then that is a different matter, as Western delegations like to say. And they use their favourite arguments, citing a lack of information, engaging in legal sophistry, and so on. Today what we are witnessing in the Security Council is a display of hypocrisy and double standards that is embarrassing to watch.

Russia has repeatedly warned that a failure to resolve the numerous crises in the Middle East, primarily in the area of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which are often fuelled by irresponsible unilateral provocative actions, will trigger increased tensions in the region. We have repeatedly said that no country in the Middle East or North Africa should become an arena for regional or international confrontation or for settling political scores.

What happened on the night of 14 April did not happen in a vacuum. Iran's steps were a response to the Security Council's shameful inaction following Israel's egregious attack on Damascus — and not the first one. Syria is constantly being bombarded by Israel.

Many today did not have the courage to state clearly that the current escalation in the Middle East is unfolding against the backdrop of West Jerusalem's operation of unprecedented scope in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, which has lasted for more than six months, despite the unambiguous demand of resolution 2728 (2024) for an immediate ceasefire. We consider such silence regarding the root causes of the current crisis to be unacceptable, especially against the backdrop of the situation surrounding Iran, which is being fuelled by our colleagues from the United States and other countries. Moreover, Israel's failure to comply with the resolution is a show of clear disrespect for the Council — for the sitting member States of the Council — and of complete disregard for the decisions of the Security Council. No one should be able to get away with non-compliance with Security Council decisions. That path is fraught with sanctions against the violators.

We all remember the dangerous escalations in January 2020, when the region was on the brink of a conflict as a result of the illicit killing, on the territory of Iraq, of Qassem Suleimani and a number of Iraqi officials, perpetrated by the United States. But Washington failed to draw the proper conclusions and, as a result, reckless acts continue to undermine the stability, security and sovereignty of Iran's regional neighbours are now copied by its allies.

We call on all parties involved in the incident to exercise restraint given the extremely tense situation on the ground in the Middle East and the obvious risk of the conflict escalating to a region-wide confrontation. We expect the regional States to resolve the existing problems through solely political and diplomatic means. We also believe that it is important that constructive international players contribute to that effort.

The spiral of confrontation and bloodshed must stop. It is urgent for the entire international community to make all necessary efforts to de-escalate the situation. Otherwise, the region could be drawn into a vicious circle of mutual attacks and violence.

In that connection, we note Tehran's signal that it does not seek further military escalation against Israel. We urge West Jerusalem to follow suit and reject the practice of provocative use of force in the Middle

East, which is fraught with extremely dangerous risks and consequences for the whole region, which is already destabilized as a result of intensified Israeli-Palestinian confrontation.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his briefing. I look forward to hearing the statements to be made by the Permanent Representatives of Iran, Israel and Syria on the evolving situation.

Since the Gaza conflict began, the international community has deplored the unacceptable humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and made strong demands for an immediate ceasefire to end the hostilities. It has also expressed grave concerns about how a prolonged conflict would exacerbate the tensions in the region, with serious compounding spillover effects.

On 1 April Iran's diplomatic premises in Syria were targeted by air strikes, resulting in multiple casualties on the Iranian side and serious damage to said premises. That incident was a grave violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, as it was an attack on the sovereignty of both Syria and Iran. It was an egregious attack.

A moment ago, Secretary-General Guterres briefed us on the escalation on 13 April, and China expresses its deep concern in that regard. We also note that Iran stated that its military action was in response to Israel's aggression against its diplomatic premises and that the matter can be deemed concluded.

China calls on the parties concerned to remain calm and exercise maximum restraint and to resolve their differences and disputes in accordance with the purposes of the United Nations Charter and international law so as to prevent further escalations.

This round of escalation is the latest manifestation of the Gaza conflict spilling over to the wider region. It serves as another reminder that the Palestinian question remains central to the Middle East issue and impacts the peace, stability and long-term security in the region. If the flames of the Gaza conflict are allowed to continue to rage unabated, then its negative spillover effects are bound to further expand, further destabilizing the region. The countries and peoples in the Middle East have no desire for — nor can they afford — a larger conflict or war. The top priority now should therefore be the effective implementation of resolution 2728 (2024) — an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

The fundamental way out is the full implementation of the two-State solution, the only way to end the vicious circle of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict once and for all. China calls on the international community, especially countries with influence, to play a constructive role in the maintenance of regional peace and stability.

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

I begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his briefing.

The Middle East is experiencing one of the bleakest and most volatile periods in modern history. The situation risks spiralling out of control if all sides do not take a step back. Malta stressed that point on 2 April (see S/PV.9593) following the deplorable attack by Israel on the Iranian diplomatic premises in Damascus on 1 April. We then stressed the need for de-escalation and for maximum restraint to be exercised by all actors in the region. Regrettably, in the light of recent developments, those calls for caution have been disregarded.

We emphasize our deep concern about the significant escalation posed by the large-scale attack consisting of drones and various missiles, launched by the Islamic Republic of Iran against Israel. We are also concerned about Iran's seizure of the container ship *MSC Aries*. The vessel, along with its crew, must be immediately and unconditionally released. At a time when our focus should be on defusing tensions and reducing conflict, including by advocating for an immediate and permanent ceasefire to the war in Gaza, facilitating the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and ensuring the delivery of sustained humanitarian aid throughout Gaza, we are witnessing only steps in the opposite direction.

Iran's direct targeting of the State of Israel risks regional catastrophe, with innocent lives bearing the brunt of all hostilities. We stress that international law, including international humanitarian law, must be respected at all times.

We once again reiterate our call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint, including in their messaging, in order to de-escalate and pursue peaceful and diplomatic solutions to all disputes.

Let us be clear: the region finds itself in turmoil and stands on the precipice of unimaginable hostilities and suffering. As the Secretary-General outlined, "neither the region nor the world can afford another war".

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Erdan (Israel): Yesterday the Ayatollah regime, in blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, attacked the State of Israel and launched 170 unmanned aircraft, 120 ballistic missiles and 30 cruise missiles, carrying 60 tons of explosive materials, at Israel. The attack was launched from Iranian soil, as well as from Lebanon, Yemen, Syria and Iraq.

From the moment I began my tenure here, in every speech and in countless letters I rang the warning bell regarding Iran. I called on the Council to take concrete action against the Ayatollah regime. I made it clear that Iran, with its hegemonic ambitions of global domination, must be stopped before it drives the world to a point of no return, to a regional war that could escalate to a world war. Sadly, no action was taken, and last night, the world witnessed an unprecedented escalation that serves as the clearest proof of what happens when warnings are not heeded.

Israel is not the boy who cried wolf. We have been screaming from the rooftops for years, trying to wake up the international community, but to no avail. If only the Council would have internalized my words, it would not have needed the bone-rattling explosions of last night's attack to wake it up.

Last night, Iran proved again that it cares nothing for Islam or Muslims. The Iranian attack seriously injured Amina Al-Hassouni, a 7-year-old Bedouin girl in Israel. But look at this video that shows how Israel intercepts Iranian drones above the Temple Mount and Al-Aqsa Mosque. Here members can look at it. This is the Al-Aqsa Mosque. To Iran, the annihilation of Israel and igniting the region is more important than Islamic holy sites.

The Ayatollah regime, in its plot to impose a global Shiite hegemony, through its proxies, has even attacked Saudi Arabia — as we all remember, the Aramco oil field — the United Arab Emirates and anyone else it views as an obstacle. I ask the Algerian representative here, how does that make him feel? Is that a price he supports — attempting to blow up mosques and murdering Muslims?

Yet while that direct Iranian attack on Israel was the first of its kind, it is just the most recent chapter in a blood-soaked saga that started from the moment the Islamic revolution reared its head. The Ayatollah regime has a

clear plan. Its goal has been and continues to be world domination by exporting its radical Shiite revolution across the globe. I assume Council members all know it.

The Islamic regime of today is no different than the Third Reich, and Ayatollah Khamenei is no different than Adolf Hitler. Hitler's Third Reich was envisioned to be a thousand-year empire, stretching across continents, just as Khamenei envisions his radical Shiite hegemony to stretch across the region and beyond. That is why Iran arms itself with intercontinental ballistic missiles. Iran and Israel are on the same continent. Council members' countries are next.

The Ayatollah regime acts like the Nazi regime, and its army includes Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hizbullah, the Houthis, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard and other savage jihadists. Instead of shouting "Sieg Heil", those radical Nazi Islamists scream "Death to Israel", "Death to America" and "Death to England". Just like the Nazi regime, the Ayatollah regime sows death and destruction everywhere it goes.

For the past years, Ukrainian civilians have been killed from the skies with Iranian weaponry. President Zelenskyy, in condemnation of Iran's attack last night, said:

"The sound of Iranian Shahed drones, a tool of terror, is the same in the skies over the Middle East and Europe. This sound must serve as a wake-up call to the free world."

I call on Council members to listen to President Zelenskyy and wake up.

Just like the ever-reaching hand of the Wehrmacht, Iran struck Albania with cyberattacks and launches strikes against Kurds in Iraq. We all remember the 2021 attack on the oil tanker *MT Mercer Street* in which British and Romanian crew members were killed. And just yesterday Iran seized a Portuguese cargo ship. The crew being held right now by Iran includes Indian, Filipino, Pakistani and Russian nationals. Iran threatens global maritime trade. Iran is not only a terrorist State, but also a pirate State.

Just this week, a court in Argentina held Iran directly responsible for the 1994 terror attack in Buenos Aires on a Jewish community centre, which killed 85 people and wounded 300.

And just like the Third Reich and its brutal SS officers, the Iranian regime not only spreads evil abroad, but also torments and murders its own citizens. In 2023

alone, the Ayatollah regime executed 834 Iranians. The regime oppresses women, while murdering them for not wearing their hijab properly. When the Iranian people peacefully protest that brutality, they are suppressed by live ammunition. Hundreds of protesters were killed, and thousands have been arrested. It is a regime that allows its own people to die of thirst in Isfahan while it funds terror around the world with billions of dollars.

What have Council members done to defend the world from Iran? Seriously, the entire globe is suffering from Iran, including the Iranian people. I ask the Council to please defend them. For years, the world has watched the rise of a Shiite Islamist Reich. Yet, just like during the rise of Nazism, the world has been deafeningly silent.

Iran has been violating Security Council resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations for years. It supplies Hizbullah with weapons in violation of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). It advances weapons proliferation in violation of resolution 2231 (2015). It violates resolutions 1540 (2004) and 2216 (2015). Why have Council members not used all possible means to condemn Iran and demand compliance? Why have they instead rolled out the red carpet for those genocidal jihadists? Why do Council members treat them as if they are interested in de-escalation when they know that the opposite is true?

Iran's strategy has been crystal clear: arm, fund and train terror proxies across the globe to carry out Iran's murderous scheme of domination. But today the mask of Iranian deniability has been removed. There is no more hiding and no more bluffing, no more shirking of responsibility. Iran has attacked Israel from its own sovereign territory publicly and proudly. The mask is off.

Iran, the number one global sponsor of terror, has exposed its true face as the destabilizer of the region and the world. And right now is when the world must stop ignoring Iran's crimes and take action. As Iran's mask has fallen, the world's complacency must also fall. The mask comes off, and the gloves must go on. The snooze button is no longer an option. The only option is to condemn Iran and use every means necessary to make it pay a heavy price for its horrible crimes. Iran and its axis of supporters must be shown that the civilized world will no longer stand idly by. Although many countries immediately condemned the attack, those that did not should ask themselves how they want history to remember them.

Last night's attack was a blatant violation of international law and the Charter. It was an act of major escalation that could drag the entire region and the world into war. I want to ask Council members to imagine the consequences if the attack had been carried out under an Iranian nuclear umbrella, or if some of Iran's missiles had nuclear warheads. The regime that launched an unprecedented strike on Israel, a fellow Member State of the United Nations, is barrelling towards nuclear capabilities. It is a terrorist State responsible for global destruction, and soon it will have nuclear capabilities. We all know that Iran is systematically violating the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and has enriched uranium up to 60 per cent purity and beyond. Iran's breakout time for producing an arsenal of nuclear weapons is now mere weeks. No concrete action has been taken and the International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors have been kept in the dark. Iran is on the verge of becoming a nuclear Power. That should terrify every member of the Council. Let us take a moment to think what might have happened if Ayatollah Khamenei could have launched a nuclear bomb last night. Is that the world we want to live in? To the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action signatories, I say that they should initiate the snap-back mechanism today and impose all possible sanctions on Iran before it is too late. We need a world led by Churchills, not Chamberlains.

On 7 October, with Iranian funding, weaponry and training, Hamas carried out the most brutal massacre of Jews since the Holocaust, slaughtering our children, burning entire communities and raping our women, taking families hostage and now abusing 133 hostages. Since then, Hizbullah, with its Iranian arms and sponsorship, has fired thousands of rockets into Israel, decimating towns. The Houthis, with Iranian weapons, instructions and intelligence, have been firing on every merchant vessel suspected of having ties to Israel. Then Iran, which directs and pays for all of that violence, carries out an attack of epic proportions on Israel.

We are being fired on from all fronts and across every border. We are surrounded by Iran's terror proxies. The war in Gaza extends far beyond Israel and Hamas. All of the terror groups attacking Israel are tentacles of the same Shiite octopus, the Iranian octopus. I ask Council members to be honest with themselves. What would they do if they were in Israel's shoes? How would they react if their existence was threatened every single day? Although the ayatollah regime thinks that Israel is merely a frog in boiling water, becoming accustomed

to the threats to its survival, and that we will not notice until it is too late, it is wrong. The Council is wrong. This attack crossed every red line and Israel reserves its legal right to retaliate. We are not a frog in boiling water. We are a nation of lions.

In the wake of such a massive and direct attack on Israel, inaction should not be an option for anyone in the world, let alone Israel. We will defend our future. Despite the magnitude of the attack, 99 per cent of Iran's uncrewed aerial vehicles and missiles were intercepted by Israel and its allies. I want to take this opportunity to thank the United States and our other partners for standing with us in defending Israel against the ayatollah regime's indiscriminate attacks. However, the fact that Israel's air defence proved superior does not change the brutality of the Iranian attack. Iran can no longer hide behind its proxies. It has now exposed itself as the terror-exporting pariah State that it is, and from now on it must be treated as such.

It is not enough to remove Iran from the Commission on the Status of Women. Iran is the world's worst human rights violator, and such a regime should not hold any position at the United Nations. There can be no more red-carpet treatment here at the United Nations and no more appeasement. Today the Council must take action. It should condemn Iran for its terror, trigger the snap-back mechanism and reimpose crippling sanctions. It must designate the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terror organization. Action must be taken now, not for Israel's sake or the region's sake, but for the world's sake. Iran must be stopped today.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): As we informed the Council in a letter last night (S/2024/305), in response to the Israeli regime's recurring military aggressions, particularly its armed attacks of 1 April on Iranian diplomatic premises, in defiance of Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations, the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran carried out a series of military strikes on Israeli military objectives with dozens of missiles and drones. Iran's operation was conducted entirely in the exercise of its inherent right to self-defence, as outlined in Article 51 of the Charter and recognized by international law. That action, now concluded, was necessary and proportionate. It was precise, targeting only military objectives, and was carried out carefully to minimize the potential for escalation and prevent harm to civilians.

We thank the members of the Council that condemned the Israeli armed attack on our diplomatic premises in Syria. Regrettably, certain members of the Council in this Chamber, including the United States, the United Kingdom and France, have once again chosen to turn a blind eye to reality and overlook the root causes contributing to the current situation. In a demonstration of hypocrisy, those three countries falsely blamed and accused Iran without considering their own failure to uphold their international commitments to peace and security in the region. They attempted, unsuccessfully, to use lies, manipulate the narrative, spread disinformation and engage in a destructive blame game. All the while, they were deliberately disregarding Iran's inherent right to respond to the violation of a fundamental principle of international law — the inviolability of diplomatic representatives and premises. Moreover, they ignored the underlying causes of the current situation in the region. For more than six months now, those countries, especially the United States, have shielded Israel from any responsibility for the Gaza massacre. While denying Iran's inherent right to self-defence against the Israeli armed attacks on our diplomatic premises, at the same time they have shamefully justified the Israeli massacre and genocide of the defenceless Palestinian people on the same pretext of self-defence, cynically trying to cover up the Israeli regime's atrocities against the people of Palestine through arbitrary and misleading interpretations of the principle of self-defence.

Following the Israeli regime's cowardly armed terrorist attack on our diplomatic premises in Damascus, on 1 April, we notified the Security Council and the Secretary-General (S/2024/281) of those internationally wrongful acts, as well as of Iran's inherent right under international law to respond to such armed terrorist attacks.

Also, in a phone conversation with the Secretary-General on 2 April, Iran's Minister for Foreign Affairs discussed the situation and called for appropriate action to be taken and for the international community's strong condemnation of this horrific crime. We called upon the Security Council to strongly denounce this unjustified criminal and terrorist act and to take decisive and appropriate measures to bring the perpetrators to justice swiftly and to prevent the recurrence of such horrible crimes against the diplomatic premises of any Member State. Regrettably, the Security Council has failed in its duty to maintain international peace and security. Russia proposed a press statement to denounce this

atrocious act, which was backed by China, Algeria and many members, but it was blocked by the United States, the United Kingdom and France. Faced with such circumstances, the Islamic Republic of Iran had no choice but to exercise its inherent right to self-defence under international law.

The root causes of the current situation are clear to all. From the start of the Israeli war against the Palestinian people in Gaza, more than 34,000 civilians — two thirds of them children and women — have been killed. All types of civilian infrastructure have been targeted and destroyed by Israel. Even humanitarian workers have not been immune from the military attacks of this rough regime. The absence of accountability and the Council's inaction regarding the Israeli genocide and war crimes against the Palestinian people have only emboldened the regime to continue its violations unchecked. The United States and its allies have blocked the Security Council for more than six months, protecting Israel from accountability for the Gaza massacre. They not only avoid condemning Israel for those atrocities but also actively try to cover them up. Their sole priority is to support and defend Israel, regardless of the consequences and at all costs. Despite international pressure and a Council resolution calling for a ceasefire, Israel has defied that resolution. Rather, its focus remains on committing more atrocious crimes, showing no regard for international legal obligations.

This lawless regime has committed many atrocious crimes against our people. It blatantly and openly admitted its responsibility for the destructive terrorist operations committed against Iranian officials, scientists and civilians and the sabotage of our peaceful nuclear infrastructure in recent years. The Israeli regime even made explicit threats to use nuclear weapons against a sovereign Member State of the United Nations. This terrorist regime is responsible for all criminal and terrorist acts committed against Iran and must bear the consequences. The Islamic Republic of Iran has warned time and again about the repercussions of the regime's malicious activities on regional and international peace and security. Iran has exercised maximum restraint. Now, it is time for the occupying regime to bear full responsibility for its consequences. The regime cannot evade accountability.

Israel's ongoing destabilizing and irresponsible actions and atrocities against the nations in the region are a real threat to regional and international peace and security. The Israeli Prime Minister's policy seeks to expand and escalate the conflict in the region to stay in

power. The members of the Security Council must not allow the Council to be held hostage by the ambitions of such a belligerent regime. It is time for the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility and address the real threat to international peace and security. The Security Council must promptly fulfil its duty under Chapter VII of the Charter in response to Israel's reckless defiance. It must take urgent and punitive measures to compel the regime to stop its genocide and massacre of the people of Gaza and uphold its obligations, especially to fully implement the Council's resolutions and the legally binding orders of the International Court of Justice.

The main and long-standing threat to the peace and security of our region is well known to all, and the attempts to conceal it through disinformation, smear campaigns or baseless accusations against others are pointless and unfounded. Iran has never sought to contribute to the spillover of the conflict in the region or to escalate or spread the tensions to the entire region. Contrary to unfounded claims, Iran has no proxy in the region. No individual, group or country acts at Iran's behest.

The United States and Israeli regime attempted to label the resistance groups in the region as proxies or terrorists. Their sinister aim is only to justify and legalize their malicious and destabilizing activities in the region. The resistance groups are not proxies or terrorists. They are legitimate and are only fighting against the occupation and aggression of Israel in Gaza and occupied Palestinian territories and of the United States in the region. International law recognized such legitimate rights against any occupation and aggression. Instead, the United States and the United Kingdom are fully responsible for all their decades-long aggressions and other crimes and unlawful measures in our region. Furthermore, they are responsible for all crimes of the Israeli regime, as it could not have committed any of those savage crimes in Gaza without the consent, order and all-out political, financial and military support of, and collaboration with, the United States and the United Kingdom. We reject the allegations made by the Israeli regime at this meeting. Such false and unfounded claims do not merit a response.

As a responsible member of the United Nations, the Islamic Republic of Iran is committed to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and reaffirms once more its commitment to the maintenance of international peace and security. The Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates its consistent position that it does not seek escalation or war in the region. While warning against any further military

provocation by the Israeli regime, the Islamic Republic of Iran reaffirms its unwavering determination to defend its people, national security and interests, sovereignty and territorial integrity against any threat or acts of aggression and to respond to any such threat or aggression vigorously and in accordance with international law. The Islamic Republic of Iran will not hesitate to exercise that right when required.

Iran has no intention of engaging in conflict with the United States in the region. We demonstrated our commitment to peace by exercising restraint in involving the United States army in intercepting Iranian drones and missiles bound for military targets in the occupied Palestinian territories. That underscores our dedication to de-escalating tensions and avoiding the expansion of the conflict. However, if the United States initiates military operations against Iran, its citizens or its security and interests, Iran will use its inherent right to respond proportionately.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Aldahhak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): What our region witnessed yesterday is a natural and inevitable consequence of the repeated acts of aggression and grave violations of international law and the Charter of the United Nations committed by the Israeli occupation authorities against the territories of my country, Syria, and other countries, benefiting from the support provided to them by the United States Administration within and outside the Security Council. That blind and unlimited United States support has led the occupation authorities to the delusion that they are above the United Nations, above international law and above the conventions and resolutions adopted by our Organization over decades. It has made them believe that they can continue to commit their crimes and escalate the situation in the region without any response or punishment.

In its official letters, my country, the Syrian Arab Republic, has repeatedly warned the Security Council and the Secretariat of the dangers of escalating and inflaming the situation, which the Israeli occupation authorities are doing to cover up their failure to achieve their military objectives in Gaza and justify the continuing genocide and brutal acts they are committing against the Palestinian people, along with their hysterical attacks on States of the region. In our letters we have also repeatedly called on the Security Council and the United Nations to act immediately, in

accordance with their mandates. However, the United States Administration and a number of its allies have hindered the Security Council from taking any action to fulfil its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, putting an end to Israel's crimes and holding it accountable for them.

Those States' behaviour is nothing new, as for seven and a half decades — in fact more than seven and a half decades — they have hindered the United Nations from fulfilling its duty to end the Israeli occupation of Arab territories and restore legitimate and established rights to their Arab owners, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, foremost among them resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981). Those resolutions constitute the main pillar and core of the solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as the means to address the crises and challenges resulting from the Israeli occupation in the region.

Syria holds the Israeli occupation authorities and the United States Administration fully responsible for Israel's aggressions and for any further escalation that threatens peace and security in the region. We want to stress that our region has suffered enough as a result of the violations of international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter committed by the Zionist entity and the United States Administration and its allies. The time has come for those States to take serious action by reviewing their destructive policies regarding our region and our peoples and taking immediate and unconditional steps to correct them, including by ensuring an immediate end to Israel's aggression against the Palestinian people and other States in the region, guaranteeing full and easy access to humanitarian assistance and putting an end to the deliberate starvation of the people of Gaza. It is also necessary to end the illegal military presence of United States forces on Syrian territory, stop their systematic looting of national wealth, end their sponsorship of terrorist organizations and separatist militias and immediately, completely and unconditionally lift the unilateral coercive measures that constitute economic terrorism and a collective punishment from which Syrians must be set free.

We listened to the statements by the representatives of some Western delegations, which once again expressed an approach based on hypocrisy and double standards. Some on this Council are used to interpreting the Charter's provisions in a manner that suits their goals and ambitions. That includes Article 51, which guarantees the fundamental right of all our States to legitimate self-defence. The

United States, Britain and France have repeatedly launched acts of aggression against my country across thousands of miles — sometimes jointly, sometimes individually — based on a distorted interpretation of Article 51 and on flimsy allegations that are nothing more than baseless lies. Not satisfied with that, they have also prevented the Security Council from discussing those attacks and taking action to uphold the principles of the Charter, which those States are trying to replace with what they call the rules-based order.

What the Islamic Republic of Iran did yesterday was a correct and effective exercise of its right to legitimate self-defence, as conceived by the founding fathers of our Organization and enshrined in Article 51 of the Charter. The Iranian response came as an urgent necessity resulting from the Israeli occupation authorities' persistent crimes and acts of aggression and by the fact that the three Western States that are permanent members of the Security Council prevented the Council from taking action to stop or even condemn them. That was clearly demonstrated when the United States, France and Britain prevented the Security Council from issuing a press statement condemning the Israeli terrorist attack on the Iranian consulate in my capital, Damascus, in flagrant violation of all international treaties and conventions that guarantee the inviolability and immunity of diplomatic premises and their personnel. That is not unusual for the States that along with their NATO allies carried out the barbaric bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in 1999.

In conclusion, on 25 April 1945 the San Francisco Conference founded the United Nations and established the Charter as the compass guiding our joint action. Among its fundamental principles, it included respect for the sovereignty and equality of Member States large and small. Today it is more important than ever that our States affirm those principles, because the success of the United Nations mandate hinges on respect for them, while violating them will lead to lawlessness and allow the law of the jungle, wars and instability to prevail. Syria, a founding member of the United Nations, continues to believe in the Organization and its principles and purposes, and looks forward to seeing it play the role entrusted to it in the maintenance of international peace and security and in addressing the root causes of the challenges facing our region, especially the Israeli occupation, which is preventing our States from achieving security and stability and the well-being of our peoples.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.